TOWARDS TRANSLATING THE QURAN:
Assessment of 120 English Translations of the Quran

Professor Abdur Raheem Kidwai
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Published by
K. A. Nizami Centre for Quranic Studies
Aligarh Muslim University

Printed by
Mishkaat Publications House
Near Centenary Gate, AMU, Aligarh
Tel: +91-9897674550 | Email: sarahmanrafiq@gmail.com

ISBN: 978-93-49760-58-5

Price: ₹ 780/-

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Dedicated to

Professor Abdallah El Khatib

College of Shariah and Islamic Studies,

Qatar University

Qatar

as a mark of appreciation for his substantial contribution to
Quranic Studies

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- Mr. Ibrahim Khan, Ph.D. Student, KA Nizami Centre for Quranic Studies, AMU, Aligarh for overseeing the production.

- Mr. Yameen Ansari, Support Staff, KA Nizami Centre for Quranic Studies, AMU, Aligarh for preparting the MSS.

- Editor, ***Muslim World Book Review***, Leicester, UK for assigning me book reviews on most of these English translations of the Quran.

INTRODUCTION

In the nameof Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful

In the 21st century there has been a spurt in the appearance of the English translations of the Quran. More than 70 new complete translations have been published between 2000 and 2025. Almost 3 translations have been appeared every year. This staggering figure is all the more striking in view of the fact that between 1649 and 1999 there existed only 70 translations: one translation appeared every five years. First and foremost, this phenomenal publication activity is reflective of the growing interest in the Quran the world over. Also, it points to the increasing number of Muslims, especially those settled in the West, whose mother tongue is English. This is in a stark contrast with the scenario only 100 years ago. There were then few English speaking Muslims, as compared to the present day millions of Muslims whose access to the resources on Islam is only through English. Little wonder then that 28 out of these 32 English translations of the Quran covered in this work are by Muslim scholars of all shades of opinion.

Notwithstanding the rising number of these translations, little critical attention has been paid to them in academic circles. This is a somewhat regrettable, nay alarming situation. For a tendentious translation, be it by an Orientalist or a sectarian zealot, is liable to mislead and delude unsuspecting readers. Since the Quran is the Word of God for Muslims, they take its message very seriously. Rather, they strive to lead their life in accordance with its teachings. An unscrupuolous translator may, however, misguide them totally and fill their mind and heart with what the Quran does not intend at all. God's Book may be wilfully misinterpreted out of his mendacious and ulterior motives. Regrettably, some reckless translators have been guilty of fanning sectarian animousity and thus subverting the very message of the Quran which consists in mutual love and respect, and tolerance. More sinister have been the designs of Qadyanis and Orientalists. The former exert themselves in trying to justify and sanctify their outlandish belief system which is discordant with the Islamic articles of faith, by twisting the

import of the Quran in their translations and explanatory notes. The Orientalists go a step further by way of discrediting altogether Islam, the Quran and Prophet Muhamad (peace be upon him), dismissing the Quran as a poor imitation of the Judeao-Christian tradition. Alan Jone's translation, published as late as in 2007, heaps all sorts of charges against the Quran. He tries his level best to persuade the readers that the Quran is an incorrigibly polemical work which demonizes non-Muslims. Needless to add, such works are bound to exacerbate the regrettable divide between "us" (the West) and "them" (Muslims). Another instance in point is the Iraqi Jew, N.J. Dawood's translation, brought out by Penguin in 1956 and of which literally millions of copies have been sold. For it has been the most readily available translation in Western libraries and book stores. However, it conjures up an image of Islam which is linked closely with injustice and violence. Take as illustrative his "Chronological Table of the Main Events in the Life of Muhammad" (pp. 7-8). For Dawood "crushing, expelling and raiding of the Jews" are the main, rather only events of the otherwise epoch-making and illustrious life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Since 1985 when I started evaluating the English translations of the Quran, I have come across several instances of plagiarism, sectarianism and Islam-bashing in the field.

The present work supplements and complements these of my earlier works: *Bibliography of the Translations of the Meanings of the Glorious Quran into English: 1649-2002* (Madina, Saudi Arabia, King Fahd Quran Printing Complex, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, 2007), *Translating the Untranslatable: A Critical Guide to 60 English Translations of the Quran* (New Delhi, Sarup Books, 2011) and *God's Word, Man's Interpretations: A Critical Study of the 21st Century English Translations of the Quran* (New Delhi, Viva Books, 2018).

While every individual translation is analysed in the present work in terms of its approach and its strengths and weaknesses, the following observations may provide readers with a better idea of the major trends in and main contours of the field of the English translations:

(i) The field of English translations is surcharged with ideological presuppositions. The first English translation by Alexander Ross in 1649 was conditioned by, and in turn, it aggravated the anti-Islam polemics of the Medieval West which misperceived Islam as no more than a Christian heresy. The title of Ross's work bears out its virulent Islam-bashing: *The Alcoran of Mahomet, Translated Out of Arabic for the Satisfaction of All that Desire to Looking Into Turkish Vanities*. Not only does Ross ascribe the authorship of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), he also misconstrues Islam and the Quran as something restricted to only the Ottoman Turks, who were a superpower in Ross's day. It was beyond his ken of imagination that any non-Turk could be a Muslim. Even in later translations by Orientalists, namely George Sale (1734), J.M. Rodwell (1861), E.H. Palmer (1880) Richard Bell (1937-1939), A.J. Arberry (1955), N. J. Dawood (1956), Alan Jones (2007), and the latest one by A.J. Droge (2014), serious mispresentation, rather wilful distortion of things Islamic is fairly common. Some early 20th century Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, however, took up the cudgels and challenged the Orientalist monopoly over the field. So what started initially has fully grown into a well developed field of study.

An obnoxious practice detected in as many as 7 translations is of unacknowledged borrowings from the earlier printed English translations. Plagiarism is an all the more reprehensible act in this particular field. One expects a translator of the Word of God to possess, at least, some degree of piety and integrity. However, the following recent translators have been found unscrulously lifting material *ad verbatim* from the earlier ones:

(i) *Majestic Quran* (2000) by the Translation Committee consists of big chunks of material taken without any acknowledgement from M.M. Pickthall (1930) and Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934-1937).

(ii) Syed Vickar Ahamed's translation (2005) is regrettably an instance of plagiarism in that it draws heavily, rather word by word, on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's (1934-1937).

(iii) Leila Bakhtiar (2007) has borrowed material from A.J. Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted* (1955).

(iv) M. Sharif Chaudhary's (2010) is based largely on Pickthall's translation (1930)

(v) Peachy's and Johani's work (2012) is derived, once again, from Pickthall's.

(vi) Jibouri's (2014) betrays the translator's borrowings from Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934-37)

(vii) Muhammad's (2017) is another plagriazed version of Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934-1937)

Although the days of the monopoly of the Orientalists over the field of English translations are over, the two recent ones of the Orientalists' variety by Alan Jones (2007) and A. J. Droge (2014) Jane Mc Auliffe (2017), and G.S. Reynolds (2018) resurrect almost all the Medieval misconceptions and misperceptions about Islam and the Quran. Brazenly they seek to discredit the text of the Quran, dismiss its contents as a poor replica of the Judaeo-Christian material and reject the Quran as a "problematic and obscure work." While Jones harps incessantly at the "polemical" design of the Quran, Droge, following in the footsteps of J. M. Rodwell, Richard Bell and John Burton, makes loose, unsubstantiated comments about the "lacunae" and "later insertions" in the Quranic text.

Thomas Cleary's (2004) is, however, a pleasant departure from this deplorable tradition. Not only does he affirm the life-giving message of the Quran, he points cogently to the affinity between the Quran and Buddhist religious texts. So doing, unlike the Orientalists, he does not cast aspersions on the originality and integrity of the Quranic text. His pioneering work has opened a new vista of Inter Faith understanding, underscoring as it does the common ground between two major world faiths Budhhism and Islam.

Some of these translations are patently sectarian in that these seek to impose their peculiar sectarian views on the Quranic text. In so doing, they take unpardonable liberties with and overstretch the Quranic text. Some instances in point are as follows, with their

respective ideological presuppositions indicated in parenthesis: i) Ali Quli Qarai (Shia), ii) Laleh Bakhtiar (Ferminism), iii) and Tahirul Qadri (Barelvi/Prophet Muhammad's/saint veneration).

More pernicious than these sectarian forays have been the Qadyani translations: For these works by Muslim sounding names preach what is totally contrary to the basic article of Islamic faith-the finality of Prophet Muhammad's Messengership. It is an irony that the Qadyanis outpaced the Muslims in bringing out English translations. As early as in 1905 Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan produced his work which is mistakenly regarded by many as the first Muslim English translation. Other notable Qadyani translators are: Mohammad Ali (1917), Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad (1947-1963), Sher Ali (1955), Malik Ghulam Farid (1969), and Muhammad Zafrullah Khan (1971). These Qadyanis carried out the translation activity with a sense of mission. Several editions and reprints of these works appeared in English and other European and African languages. However, as Muslim scholars all over the world vigorously exposed the un-Islamic creed of Qadyanis, their Quran translation project has lost its momentum. After 1971 there appeared only one new Qadyani translation in 2005 by Omars, which is discussed in the present work.

A mind-boggling aspect of some English translations is that though these are by persons bearing Muslim names, they tend to be dismissive of the divine origin of the Quran, the Prophet's integrity, the authenticity of the Quranic text and the sound credentials of the Prophet's Companions, Hadith and all things Islamic. Earlier representatives of this deplorable approach are: Rashad Khalifa (1978), and M. A. K. Pathan (1993). Of late, there has been a steep increase in such obnoxious works, namely by Edip Yuksel (2007) Ijaz Chaudry (2013) and Kader Abdolah (2016). Their works are more damaging than those by the Orientalists and Qadyanis, for naïve readers may mistake these as authentic works by Muslims. Take Kader Abdolah as illustrative. Impudently he finds fault with the Quranic text, ascribes its authorship to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and claims to have added two Chapters to the

Quran. Such a reckless, nay mindless response to a Scripture, which is very dear to the heart of more than a billion Muslims all over the world, defies norms of civility and logic.

A highly welcome recent trend in the field, being an offshoot of comparative religion, has been to bring into light the common ground between Islam/the Quran and other major world faiths. It represents a pleasant break from the Orientalists' attempts which focused only on harping at the so-called borrowings in the Quran from the Judaeo-Christian sources. Two delightful instances of this new trend for forging better Inter Faith understanding are Thomas Cleary's (2004) and Safi Kaskas's and David Hungerford's (2017) which point to the commonalities between the Quran, and Buddhism and Judaeo-Christian tradition respectively.

Another equally pleasant feature of some recent translations is that these present the true meaning and message of the Quran in chaste, easy to understand English. Ahmad Zaki Hammad's (2007), Tarif Khalidi's (2008), Saheeh International's (2012), Mufti Afzal Hoosen Elias's (2015) and Mustafa Khattab's (2016) succeed remarkably in conveying the import of the Quran. Several earlier translations, mostly by South Asian Muslims, betrayed poor grasp over the English language and idiom, and hence these were not of much help and guidance for the readers who were new to the Quran. Hammad's and Khattab's works stand out for their reader friendly and other presentational features.

Some of the recent translations are the fruits of collaborative teamwork, as for example, the ones by the Translation Committee (2000) Abdalhaqq and Aisha Bewley (2011), Saheeh International (2012) and Monotheist Group (2017). This underscores the growing sensitivity about the needs of readers. It is a healthy, positive development which is destined to improve the quality of such ventures in future.

Since 2000 Desktop/ PDF versions of English Translations have mushroomed. Around 40 such ventures appear on internet. Owing to the lack of quality control no need a reputed publisher's endorsement, and minimal production costs, it appears that anyone

and everyone is having a go, without any scruples for the sanctity of this assignment: presenting the word of Allah before readers who are vulnerable as they do not know Arabic. Those embarking on such a venture should be more sincere and conscientious. They should not, at least mislead unsuspecting readers. Imams and community leaders should awaken Muslims on this issue. They should consult a reliable translation by a Muslim scholar who is proficient in both Arabic and English and has some idea of readers' needs. It would be wonderful if the translator relates the timeless message of the Quran to current issues.

In sum, notwithstanding the intense activity in the field, there is still a need for a reader friendly translation in idiomatic English which may cater to the varying needs of an ever increasing English readership. Despite a large number of translations in English, the field is not so rich and substantial, as it is in the case of Persian, Turkish and Urdu. What is, however, gratifying is that as compared to 1980s, the scene is far better and brighter. Muslims scholars now dominate the field and their pious ventures have been of much help to readers in order to gain some idea of the life-giving Quranic message and guidance which was otherwise inaccessible to the non-Arabic speaking readers. More importantly, some of these quality translations now serve as excellent resource for the Islamic upbringing of millions of young Muslims whose mother tongue is English. These translations illustrate how Muslims have in the last 100 years appropriated English, once the devastating agent of Westernizing Muslims, now for promoting the life ennobling divine guidance embodied in the Quran.

Rabi Al Thani 1447 H
October, 2025

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PART - I
BY MUSLIMS

1
Fazl, Abul
The Quran
(1911)

This translation has the only notable feature of being one of the first English translations by Muslims. Otherwise, both in its conception and execution it is a poor work. Furthermore, Abul Fazl was not some distinguished scholar of Islam. He claims in his "Preface" somewhat pretentiously: "This work contains the pure textual translation of the Quran and is equal to the best translation in any language. All extraneous matters which make the Quran property of a sect are scrupulously avoided, and the Quran is here allowed to speak for itself with such aid as might appeal to the individual conscience of its readers."

More intriguingly, he takes the drastic step of "arranging the Surahs in the chronological order..." In so doing, he deviates from the traditional, received Surah order of the Quran. In introducing what the Quran is, he commits another serious mistake in saying: "...the Quran was never given as a book: it is a Prophet's cry to his people, with a purpose which is throughout stamped upon each verse as ineffaceably as anything." This is gleefully interpreted by the notorious Islam-bashing Orientalist-Missionary, S.M. Zwemer as the beginning of the textual criticism of the Quran by Muslims, and as proof of their rejection of "all faith in the traditions." Abul Fazl's translation of Surah al-Fil points to his interpolation of extra-Quranic material into the body of the text. The work suffers also from poor presentation. It abounds in typographical errors and betrays the translator's lack of command over the target language-English. It is not therefore surprising that only three editions of this translation came out. The first two appeared in 1912 and 1916 respectively, and the last one in 1955. Occasionally does he refer to the Bible in elucidating the meaning and message of the Quran. Owing to the little known credentials of the translator, his

unconventional stance on the Surah order, poor presentation and lack of any striking feature Abul Fazl's translation has gone largely unnoticed. Its significance resides only in being one of the earliest attempts by Muslims to bring out the English translation of the Quran. He commits a serious error in mistranslating *anhar* (Al-Kawthar 108:2) as "stand upright." This Quranic expression is used for animal sacrifice. Likewise, he mistranslates *iqra* (Al-Alaq 96:1 and 3) as "cry" in place of recite or read.

References

1. Zwemer, S.M., "Review on Abul Fazl's English Translation of the Quran," *Muslim World 2* (1912), 82.

Publication details of the first edition:

Allahabad, India, G.A. Asghar and Co., 1911-1912. 2 Volumes. Volume I: 752 pages and Volume II: 320 pages.

Number of Editions: 3

Other Reviews:

- Zwemer, S.M. "Review on Abul Fazl's English Translation of the Quran, *Muslim World 2* (1912), 82-83.

2
Dihalwi, Hairat
The Quran
(1916)

Like Abul Fazl's, the significance of Hairat Dihalwi's translation consists in being one of the earliest attempts by Muslims to produce the English translation of the Quran. Unlike Abul Fazl's, it, however, does not represent any departure from the mainstream Muslim stance on the Quran. More significantly, it records a powerful statement - of alerting the Muslims of the Indo-Pak subcontinent to the Missionary/Orientalist onslaught against Islam and the Quran and taking up this challenge at the scholarly level. For this work is intended as "a complete and exhaustive reply to the manifold criticism of the Koran by various Christian authors as Drs Sale, Rodwell, Palmer and Sir William Muir." While Sale, Rodwell and Palmer had hurled all sorts of allegations against the Quran, Muir had attacked Prophet Muhammad's life and career in particular. Hairat Dihalwi's and his editorial team's familiarity with the works of the leading Orientalists underscores both the level of their scholarship and their pious enthusiasm to defend Islam and the Quran. In the heyday of British colonial India, their response to the challenge posed by Missionaries and Orientalists is indeed significant and laudable.

Hairat Dihalwi published this work in collaboration with some little known writers, who are not named and presented only as "Oriental Learned Scholars" on the title page. The level of both the English translation and presentation leaves much to be desired. There is almost nothing on record about Hairat Dihalwi or his team members. Copies of his translation are not found in any Indo-Pakistani or Western library. It was reprinted only once in 1930, after its first appearance in 1916. Nor is any review or critical notice of this work available.

As was customary in the day, in early 20th century British India, like Abul Fazl, Mirza Hairat Dihalwi has employed archaic English in his translation, as for example, "thee, thou, hast, art, doth, misleadth, guideth, hath, thy, ye, growth, believeth, haply, etc." He betrays apologetic attitude in explaining miracles, Jinn, Howis, etc., His interpretation of verse 34 of Al-Nisa betrays his misperception that the Quran is a dated work. For, with the "foundation of regular civil courts, the personal powers of husband and the father as the head of the household were transferred to the court" (p. 98). He nonetheless, vindicates the truth of Islam, as compared to chiristianity.

To sum up, it represents a pious undertaking of some well-meaning, though not competent Muslims, who tried to take up the scholarly challenge by way of refuting the Orientalists' attacks against the Quran. As they were not equipped with the requisite academic training and tools, they could not deliver what they sought to accomplish. As a result, their work has been lost in oblivion. They, nonetheless, are to be complimented for their awareness and for sensitizing Muslims of the subcontinent to the dangers that lay ahead of them. At a later date, some better trained Muslim scholars responded effectively and vigorously to the threat posed by the Orientalists. Hairat Dihalwi and his team did pave the way for the later-day accomplishments.

Publication details of the first edition:

Delhi, India, H.M. Press, 1916. 3, Volumes. Volume I: 229 pages; Volume II: 251 pages and Volume III: 286 pages.

Number of Editions: 2

3
Sarwar, Ghulam
The Holy Quran
(1920)

It is yet another English translation of the Quran, undertaken by a Muslim scholar of the Indo-Pak subcontinent, against the backdrop of the Colonial/ Missionary/Orientalist attacks against Islam in the British India of early twentieth century. After having graduated from Government College, Lahore in 1890-1894, he joined the University of Cambridge and was selected for the Malayan (present day Malaysia) Civil Service. He had his illustrious career there for thirty-two years. In comparison to the other early Muslim translators namely, Abul Fazl and Hairat Dihalwi, he was grounded well in the Western academic tradition. This is reflected at its sharpest in his exhaustive critique of the Orientalists Sale's, Rodwell's and Palmer's, and the Qadyani Muhammad Ali's translations of the Quran. His critique is a testament also to his deep and thorough understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran, to his wide-ranging scholarship and to his genuine concern for the faithful transmission of the contents of the Quran. Notwithstanding his scathing criticism against the deliberate twisting of the import of the Quran by the Missionaries/ Orientalists, he is fair enough to appreciate their positive contributions as well. His critique is indeed an outstanding piece of sound, sterling scholarship and stands out for its assiduity and its painstaking attention to detail and for his sharp critical eye. For example, he brings home the imposture and forgery committed by George Sale (pp. vii-viii) in claiming to have drawn upon a very large number of the classical Muslim *tafasir* in Arabic. Sarwar delves into the British Museum catalogue of Sale's personal library and discovers: "... it contains hardly any of the Arabic works and none of the commentaries" (p. viii). He points to Sale's mistranslation of *basmalah*, the opening formula that prefaces 113

Quranic Surahs. For Sale, there is no distinction between the Quranic expression "al-Rahman" and "al-Rahim," as Sale lumps them together and renders both as "Most Merciful" (p. ix). Throughout his critique he lays bare the unpardonable mistakes committed by Sale: "Just as Sale distorts the meaning of the Holy Quran by substituting "*O Men of Mecca*" for the general expression O men" or "O mankind," in the same way he puts (Verse 143 of Al-Baqarah "You, *O Arabians*" whereas God means "You (Muslims). The words "O Arabians" or "Of Mecca" are not in the text, but Sale's interpolations." (p. xi). On the approach and methodology adopted by the other Orientalist Quran translator, J. M. Rodwell, Sarwar makes this perceptive comment: "He has taken the 114 chapters of the Holy Quran, disrupted their order and rearranged them according to what he calls the chronological order- as if Muhammad (peace be with him) sat down and wrote a *Surah* and when finished it he wrote another, somewhat like Shakespeare's plays. Nothing could be more foolish to imagine. The verses of the Holy Quran were revealed according to God's pleasure and not according to Rodwell's time-table or Noldeke's chronology." (p. xxii). His evaluation of Palmer's translation, in comparison to Sale's and Rodwell's is as follows: "Sale had the prosecuting lawyer's bias, Rodwell had the missionary's bias and Palmer had the author's bias. Sale called the Holy Quran to be a manifest forgery and imposture, and he is himself proved to be guilty of lies. Rodwell called it fragment of truths, and he is himself proved to be guilty of inaccuracies. Palmer called the language of the Holy Quran inelegant. His own English is proved to be inelegant." (p. xxxiv). Had Sarwar lived longer, the Quranic scholarship would have been richer, as he would have contributed similar excellent reviews on Bell's, Dawood's, and Arberry's ventures.

Notwithstanding its tremendous value, Sarwar's critique in marred by his inexplicable ambivalence towards the Qadyani translator of his day, Muhammad Ali. Throughout he heaps praise on Ali's translation for its many merits, some real and others imaginary. Amid his glowing tribute he makes no mention of Ali's bizarre

stance on the miracles reported in the Quran. Nor does he say a word about Ali's Qadyani credentials and the interpolation of Qadyani beliefs into his explanatory notes on the Quran translation. On the contrary, he extols Ali's work thus:

> the whole book is labour of love for which Muslims and non-Muslims alike are forever indebted to Maulvi Muhammad Ali. There is no other translation or commentary of the Holy Quran in the English language to compete with his masterpiece. For ten years past I have always carried his translation. (p. xxxvii)

Despite the above fulsome praise, he points to some glaring weaknesses in Ali's work: "... the English in scores of passages have very poor construction and is left hanging in mid air." (p.xxxvii) Furthermore, he identifies around 25 instances of mistranslation or omission in Ali's translation (pp. xxxvii-xlii). These factors perhaps prompted Sarwar to undertake a new translation in idiomatic English. His mission statement is as follows:

> I have attempted to be as clear as I can, and for this purpose I have divided my sentences into short phrases... a translator should attempt to make his style clear and vigorous... my endeavour [has been] to make my translation both simple and exact.
>
> I have confined my attention to the translation of the text and have eschewed comments and commentaries as much as I could.
>
> Clearness, ease and accuracy are the three aims I have had in view... (p. xliii).

His translation has few notes. In his opinion, "a translator should not detract the reader's attention from the text to footnotes" (p. xlii). This betrays misplaced caution. Carefully selected and well-articulated annotation, drawn from Hadith and *tafsir* corpus is of immense help for the uninitiated readers of the Quran.

As Sarwar was posted in Malaya, his first edition was published from Singapore. In the 1930s, some reprints were issued in the UK. Since then, however, only one edition has come out from Karachi,

Pakistan in 1973. As a result, his translation is largely out of circulation and is found only in few libraries.

Publication details of the first edition:

Singapore, 1920, 377 pages.

Number of Editions: 10

Other Reviews:

Shellabear, W.G. “Translation of the Holy Quran by Al-Haj Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar,” *Muslim World 31* (1941), 91-93.

Sawrar, Al-Hafiz Ghulam
The Noble Quran with English Translation
(2023)

Restu Foundation, Malaysia has done well to commemorate after almost 100 years the Malaysian Mufti Al-Haj Al-Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar's publication of English translation of the Quran in 1929. Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia has graciously sponsored the printing and distribution of one million copies of this work in 50 major languages of the world which will facilitate wider dissemination of the message of the Quran across the world.

Datuk Abdul Latiff Mirasa, Restu Foundation Chairman's "Prefatorial Introduction" acclaims Sarwar's (1873-1954) Quranic scholarship. Notwithstanding his tribute, his note falls short on many counts of editorial research. First, the inexcusable omission of Sarwar's name as the author of this work on the title page. Equally irksome is his scant information about the publication history of Sarwar's translation. He refers in passing to the first edition of 1923; it came out in 1929 (Surrey, Woking Mosque, 377 pages). More importantly, as detailed in my *Bibliography of the Translations of the Quran in English: 1649-2002* (Madina, King Fahd Quran Printing Complex, 2007), it was reissued a few times, the latest in 1973 by National Book Foundation, Karachi, Pakistan. However, Mirasa believes: "the work was never reprinted" after the 1929 edition. He has aptly identified clarity and use of simple English, free from the then current Latinism as hallmarks of Sarwar's venture. Also, he has pointed out that Sarwar disapproved the insertion of annotations on the Quranic text. In the absence of any glossary either, those new to the Quran find it hard to benefit from a translation only, which is not supplemented with explanatory notes. Intriguingly enough, the present editor, Mirasa has dropped Sarwar's valuable, extensive note on Sirah and the contents of the Quran, which appears in the 1929 edition.

Equally inexplicable is the deletion of Sarwar's in-depth critique on the English translations by George Sale, J.M. Rodwell and E.H. Palmer. Painstakingly enough, Sarwar has identified numerous instances of mistranslation and unpardonable liberties taken by these Orientalists which distort the meaning and message of the Quran. He thus stands out as a pioneering scholar in the field who demonstrated the mischief unleashed by these Orientalists aimed at discrediting the Quran and misguiding the unsuspecting reading public. For example, he brings home the imposture and forgery committed by George Sale. Although Sale claimed to have drawn upon a very large number of classical Muslim *tafasir* in Arabic, Sarwar cross-checked this with the British Museum catalogue of Sale's personal library and discovered to his shock: "…it contains hardly any of the Arabic works and none of the commentaries (*tafasir*)" (p.viii, 1929 edition). Sale's recklessness as a translator and his disregard for the Quranic/Arabic lexicon are reflected by his careless translation of *basmalah*, the opening formula that prefaces 113 Quranic Surahs. For, he lumps together the two divine attributes, *al-rahman* and *al-raheem* and renders these as "Most Merciful," without an eye for the nuanced Quranic usage. (p.ix) Insightfully Sarwar points out: "Just as Sale distorts the meaning of the Holy Quran by substituting "O Men of Mecca" for the general expression "O men" or "O mankind," in the same way he puts (verse 143 of Al-Baqarah): "You, *O Arabians*" whereas God means: "You (Muslims)." The words "O Arabians" or "Of Mecca" are not in the text, but Sale's interpolation." (p.xi). Sarwar denounces Rodwell for his sacrilege in wreaking havoc upon the received Surah order: "He has taken 114 chapters of the Holy Quran, disrupted their order and rearranged them according to what he calls the chronological order— as if Muhammad (peace be upon him) sat down, wrote a Surah and when finished it he wrote another somewhat like Shakespeare's plays. Nothing could be more foolish to imagine. The verses of the Holy Quran were revealed according to God's pleasure and not according to Rodwell's time-table or Noldeke's chronology" (p.xxii). He sums up these translators' errors of perspective thus: "Sale had the prosecuting lawyer's bias,

Rodwell had the missionary's bias and Palmer had the author's bias." (p.xxxiv). With the appearance of 100+ complete English translations by Muslims in the last 100 years, this menace of the misrepresentation of the Quran by Orientalists has been considerably diminished.

Mirasa is to be complimented for having replaced Sarwar's archaic expressions (thou, dost, shew etc) with simple, modern English. His following additions are also welcome: Supplication upon completing the recitation of the Quran; a note on Punctuation signs in the Arabic text; Insertion of the Quranic text; Inclusion of a selection of Hadith; Introduction to and advantages of reciting the Quran and a brief Index.

As already indicated, the edition under review carries Sarwar's slightly revised translation in simple, elegant English, free from cumbersome archaic English of 1929 edition. An instance in point is the rendering of Surah Al-Ikhlas:

- We commence with the name of God,
  The most Merciful (to begin with),
  The most Merciful (to the end).
  Say thou "He is God the One,
  God Unique
  He gives not birth
  Nor is the born
  Neither is there anyone like unto Him"

  (p.377, 1929 edition)

- In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful
  Say: "He is Allah, the One.
  Allah, the Unique.
  He begets not, nor is He begotten.
  And there is none like unto Him."

  (p.604, 2023 edition)

Sarwar was a close friend of Abdullah Yusuf Ali who produced his English translation in 1934-37. Notwithstanding the latter's excellent scholarly credentials. What has gone unnoticed all along is Yusuf Ali's indebtedness to Sarwar in his English rendering.

Illustrative of this amazing truth are the following versions by the two:

1) But those who believe and do righteous deeds, and believe in what has been sent down to Muhammad, for it is the truth from their Lord. (Muhammad 47:2; Sarwar, p.507)

   But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and believe in the (Revelation) sent down to Muhammad, for it is the truth from their Lord. (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p.519).

2) Then when they felt Our punishment, behold! They began to flee from it. "Flee not but return to that which you were given in wealth, and to your dwellings, in order that you may be called to account." (Al-Anbiya 21:12-13, Sarwar, p.323)

   Yet, when they felt Our Punishment (coming), behold, they (tried to) flee from it. Flee not, but return to the good things of this life which were given you, and to your homes, in order that you may be called to account. (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p.323)

3) And to Him belongs all those who are in the heavens and the earth, all are obedient to Him. (Al-Rum 30:26, Sarwar, p.407)

   To Him belongs every being that is in the heavens and on earth, all are devoutly obedient to Him. (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p.405)

More baffling, however, is Sarwar's enigmatic stance on Muhammad Ali (1874-1951), the Qadyani translator who presented his version in 1917. In his prefatory note he heaps praise on Ali's venture. Amid his glowing tribute he never mentions Ali's Qadyani credentials, his bizarre attempt to divest all the miracles mentioned in the Quran of their supranatural aura. Without displaying any discernment or sense of proportion he extols Ali: "There is no other translation or commentary in the English language to compete with his masterpiece. For ten years I have always carried his translation." (p. xxxvii). Most probably under the same influence Sarwar mistranslates some Quranic verses which Qadyani translators audaciously twist in order to supplant their whimsical Qadyani beliefs about Prophet Isa's death and Mirza Ghulam

Ahmad's appearance as the promised messenger. Here are a couple of such tendentious renderings: i) "When God said, "O Jesus, I will give thee full reward" in place of "God said: "O Jesus, I will recall you." (p,33, 1929 edition). ii) Jesus said "when Thou did give me my full" (Al-Maidah 5:117, 72, 1929 edition), of which the correct version is: "Jesus said: "when You recalled me." in the present edition both of these mistakes have, however, been rectified.

Restu Foundation deserves credit for having restored Sarwar's largely unacknowledged work in circulation. Devoid of explanatory notes, it has nonetheless, limited appeal and little use for readers.

Details of the edition:
Selangor, Malaysia, Restu Foundation, 2023, pp. 604

4
Pickthall, Muhammad Marmaduke
The Meaning of the Glorious Quran
(1930)

Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936), a British man of letters, who embraced Islam in 1914, was the son of Reverend Charles Pickthall, Rector of Chillesford, Suffolk, UK. His close association with the Druzes of Mount Lebanon during his visit to the Middle East and his study of Arabic kindled in him love for Islam and Muslims. In 1919 he served as Imam of Woking mosque, Surrey, UK and edited a scholarly journal, *The Islamic Review*. It was during this period that he realized the need for a suitable English translation of the Quran, as he noted with dismay the Qadyani Muhammad Ali's translation (1917) and the Orientalists' translations littered with serious mistakes. The Nizam of Hyderabad offered him a job in the state education service and sponsored his venture of the English translation of the Quran. In consultation with al-Azhar Ulema, especially Mustafa al-Maraghi, Pickthall published his translation in 1930. Since its publication it has enjoyed great popularity. It has been published from almost all parts of the world - the US, UK, Indian subcontinent and Africa. With the ever-increasing number of English-speaking Muslims, it has been frequently reissued: more than 80 editions have come out in the last two decades.

A highly welcome and distinctive feature of his translation is its faithfulness to the original. Unlike his contemporary, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, he does not offer the English paraphrasing of the Quranic text. Instead he adheres close to the Quranic text and manages to avoid the pitfalls of a literal translation. Since his is a translation by a native speaker well-grounded in the nuances of English language, it surpasses other translations in its elegance of style and diction. The absence of sufficient explanatory notes, however, is a serious defect in his work. As a result, it fails to

advance the understanding of uninitiated readers about the meaning and message of the Quran. At places, he has deviated from the Muslim mainstream stance. On the whole, however, he is not guilty of twisting or distorting the meaning of the Quran, with a motive to giving it any particular slant, which is regrettably the case with some of even Muslim translators of the Quran. Pickthall's work, in sum, is free from any dogmatic interpolations, enabling readers to gain first-hand acquaintance with the message of the Quran.

As Pickthall's work came out in 1930, and he opted for Biblical English, it has become a dated work, not very useful for today's readers. It is gratifying that Arafat K. El-Ashi has revised it thoroughly, especially in terms of simplifying its language, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran: Revised and Edited in Modern Standard English* (Beltsville, USA, Amana, 1996, 709 pages, ISBN: 091-5857-23-X).

Below is the critical assessment of El-Ashi's venture:

El-Ashi's venture stands out as a very welcome addition to the fairly recent sub-genre of revised editions of earlier English translations of the Quran. Curiously enough, in certain instances, the revision has been carried out by someone who does not happen to be the original author and then posthumously. Both Abdullah Yusuf Ali's revised edition (1989) and El-Ashi's fall into this category. In this recent past, there have also appeared thoroughly and not-so-thoroughly revised editions undertaken by the authors themselves, as for example, by S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali and Mirza Aqa Puya (1990), N.J. Dawood (1990) and T.B. Irving (1992).

The most gratifying and outstanding feature of this 'revision' activity is that it reflects a serious and genuine concern for presenting the meaning and message of the Quran in the best way for readers. El-Ashi, too, is prompted by the same consideration.

Unlike the revised editions of Yusuf Ali and Dawood, which involve a major recasting and revision of the original material by way of expurgating some unacceptable explanatory notes El-Ashi seeks, in the main, 'to simplify Pickthall's style, for example, by

replacing the poetic pronouns and verbs like "thou, thy, thine and hast" with their more ordinary and common counterparts "you, your, yours and has" respectively, and by providing a more accurate rendering' (p. viii).

El-Ashi emerges remarkably successfully in this task of representing Pickthall's work in a highly readable and refreshing style. The work now stands free from the cumbersome and archaic usage and stylistic peculiarities which had often restricted the use of Pickthall's otherwise brilliant translation.

Another excellence of El-Ashi's assiduous and intelligent editing consists in bringing out more clearly the intent of the Quran. For example, the English rendering of verse 219 of Surah al-Shu'ara, now appears more faithful to the original. Likewise, the introduction to al-Naml now stands fully in line with the mainstream view in that El-Ashi has replaced the pseudo-rational interpretation of the story of the Prophet Solomon, cited by Pickthall, with a stout vindication of miracles (p. 351). Other pleasant instances of such discerning and thorough editing occur in the introduction to al-Rahman and al-Jinn (pp. 533 and 596 respectively). The same holds true for El-Ashi's new explanatory note on verse 76 of al-Naml, pointing out as it does the Quranic view on man's place in the divine scheme of things (p. 438). His inclusion of an alternative meaning of verse 77 of al-Furqan states more sharply the import of that verse (p. 339). In a similar vein is his revision of Pickthall's rendering of verse 77 of al-Zukhruf (p. 478). Equally apt are his additional notes on other possible, rather more plausible meanings of verse 18 of al-Qalam and verse 8 of al-Dahr (p. 584 and 611 respectively). El-Ashi does well to drop Pickthall's far-fetched 'mystical' dimension of the title of al-Tin (p. 657). He deserves credit also for deleting Pickthall's occasional fallacious observation on the opening verses of al- 'Adiyat: 'The meaning of the first five verses is by no means clear. El-Ashi substitutes it with his new note which helps one grasp better the underlying message of these verses' (p. 668).

In sum, El-Ashi's revision stands out as a masterly work of thorough, discerning and very helpful editing. This 'Revised edition' will certainly contribute to a better appreciation of Pickthall's original work. More importantly, it will enable readers to gain a sharper understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran. Both the editor and the publisher deserve congratulations on conceiving and executing this much-needed work.

Before bringing out the next edition the publisher/editor will nevertheless do well to (i) include the Quranic text, (ii) rectify the typographical errors on pp. 369, 382, 657 and 701 and (iii) consult Iqbal H. Ansari's, though not very substantial, *Corrections of Errors in Pickthall's English Translation of the Glorious Quran* (Karachi, Pakistan, n.d., pages 24). These steps would further enhance the merit of what is a highly valuable work.

Publication details of the first edition:

London, Allen and Unwin, 1930, 693 pages.

Number of Editions: More than 150.

Other Reviews:

- Author not stated, "Review on Pickthall's English Translation of the Quran," *Muslim World 21,* (1931), 287-303.
- Ansari, Iqbal Husain, *Corrections of Errors in Pickthall's English Translation of the Glorious Quran,* Karachi, Published by the Author, 1991, 24 pp. See A.R. Kidwai's review on this booklet in the *Muslim World Book Review*, 13:1, (Autumn 1992), 15-16.

5
Ali, Abdullah Yusuf
The Holy Quran
(1934-1937)

Since its first appearance in 1934-37, Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The Meaning of The Glorious Quran: Translation and Commentary* has occupied the pride of place amid the English translations of the Quran by Muslim scholars in that it has been reprinted more than 200 times and has thus gained general currency among the English reading public, comprising both Muslims and non-Muslims. The kingdom of Saudi Arabia distributed over the years free copies of this translation.[1]

His fluent and highly readable paraphrasing of the Arabic text couched in chaste English and supplemented by exhaustive comments, reflective as they are of his sweeping scholarship, no doubt, make his work one of the best English renderings of the Quran.

What is, however, most irksome in this work are Abdullah Yusuf Ali's views on the Quranic eschatology, which far from representing the orthodox Muslim viewpoint, smack of pure apologia. Pivotal to Islamic faith is the belief in the Hereafter or eschatology, along with the belief in Allah, the Quran, prophets, angels and the divine decree. One who denies or harbours any reservations about any of these articles of faith is simply outside the pale of Islam. Apart from this doctrinal significance, the belief in the Hereafter constitutes also a moral, social and ethical necessity. One's outlook on life, rather the very course of one's life style is moulded, in large measure, by this belief.

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[1] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran: Translation and Commentary*, (Cairo, Dar al-Kitab al-Masri, n.d.) All subsequent references are to this edition.

To contend that Abdullah Yusuf Ali downright rejects the Quranic eschatology would, of course, amount to an indulgence in exaggeration. Nonetheless, his treatment of the subject, as is evident from his notes on the relevant Quranic verses betrays the continuation of Sir Syed's modernist and apologetic approach to the Quranic exegesis. Overawed and unnerved by the Western viewpoint, which rules out the possibility of Life After-Death, Abdullah Yusuf Ali is found almost always taking recourse to interpreting almost all the Quranic verses dealing with eschatology as "symbolic," "allegorical" or "figurative." Indicative of this viewpoint is the purport of the Appendix XII entitled, "The Muslim Heaven" written with a view to refuting

> some ignorant critics of Islam [who] imagine that Islam postulates a sensual heaven, and they press into service some garbled versions of what some of our own material-minded brethren have said on the subject.

In the same apologetic vein he contends:

> Our doctrine of the Hereafter is not strictly a doctrine of Rewards and Punishments.... To be righteous merely for the hope of reward for one's self or for fear of punishment may be good at a certain elementary stage of spiritual progress when higher motives are yet unintelligible. But as the light of Islam illumines the soul more and more, it is seen that virtue is its own reward and evil its own punishment.[2]

The following brief discussion on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's views on the Last Day, Garden, houris, joys of Paradise. Rewards and Punishments, Fire, the Throne, the Quranic angelology and the Record helps bring out his unconventional stance about the Quranic eschatology.

The opening verses (8-11) of Surah al-Mursalat discuss in detail the great upheaval on the Last Day the effacing of stars, cleaving of the sky and scattering of mountains. However, for Abdullah Yusuf Ali, the detailed Quranic account of the great upheaval is

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2 Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 1464-5.

merely "allegorical."[3] In the similar elusive terms of reference he explains the happenings of the Last Day (al-Infitar 82: 1-4) thus:

> The metaphor behind the scattering of the constellation is that in the present order of things we see many things associated together e.g. rank with honour, wealth with comfort etc. In the new Spiritual World this will be seen to have been merely fortuitous.
>
> The oceans will overwhelm the whole globe. Figuratively, the different streams of knowledge, great and small, will be levelled down, for only One knowledge, the Light Divine will hold the field.[4]

That the sky will be rent asunder and the earth flattened out on the Last Day, as described in the Quran (al-Inshiqaq 84: 1-3) are "symbols"[5] in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's view.

Commenting on Al-Baqarah 2:25 he refers to the Gardens as a symbol of felicity and therefore rejects the physical associations of the "Companions" in Paradise, interpreting the companionship as only of souls.[6] Such an ascetic view of the Paradise is not entertained by other leading Muslim exegetes like Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi and Abdul Majid Daryabadi who offer a faithful interpretation of the joys of Paradise thus:

> In Paradise the spouses will be joined on the basis of piety and they will continue to live as husband and wife for ever in Paradise.[7]

Daryabadi's note is more explicit:

> *azwaj* are wives purified from the pollution of the menstrual discharge and other natural evacuations. Lack of conjugal love

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3 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1664, n. 5867.

4 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1699, nn. 5999-6000.

5 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1709, n. 6031.

6 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 22, n. 44.

7 Abul Ala Mawdudi, *The Meaning of the Quran*, (Lahore, Islamic Publications, 1975), Vol. I, p. 62, n. 27.

> and happiness would surely be an impoverishment not an enhancement of the Life to Come.[8]

In his notes on al-Tawbah 9: 100, Ya Sin 36: 55, Muhammad 47: 15, al-Dhariyat 51: 54 too, Abdullah Yusuf Ali treats the Gardens as mere symbols.[9]

Although the Quran renders the following vivacious account of the righteous people enjoying the beatitude in Paradise:

> As to the righteous (they will be) in a position of security among gardens and springs, dressed in fine silk and in rich brocade. They will face each other. so, and We shall join them to companions with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes. There can they call for every kind of fruit. (al-Dukhan 44: 51-55)

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, in his explanatory note, ruthlessly shears the beatific scene of all its physical charms and dimensions:

> These symbolic words need not to be taken that there will be eating and drinking or dressing or marriage, or any physical thing of the kind.[10]

In other places too, such as al-Rahman 55: 56 al-Waqiah 56: 22, and al-Naba 78: 33, he refers to the companions of Paradise as "symbols of purity, grace, beauty, innocence, truth and sympathy," without admitting their physical existence. [11]

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8 Abdul Majid Daryabadi, *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Karachi, Taj Company, 1971), Vol. 1, p. 88, n. 108.

9 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran*.
Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 471, n. 1346.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 928, n. 3065.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1182, n. 4001.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1381, n. 4833.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1422, n. 4998.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1463, n. 5168.

10 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1352, n. 4728.

11 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1480, n. 5210.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1486, n. 5233.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1676, n. 5906

The detailed Quranic description of the numerous joys of Paradise, exclusive to the righteous, has pre-eminently physical overtones, as is evident from the following passages:

> For them is sustenance determined, fruits, round will be passed to them a cup from a clear-flowing fountain crystal - white of a taste, delicious to those who drink (thereof). (Ya Sin 36: 42, 45-46)
>
> Therein will they recline (at ease). Therein can they call at pleasure for fruit in abundance, and delicious drink. (Sa'd 38: 51)
>
> You shall have therein abundance of fruit, from which you shall have satisfaction. (al-Zukhruf 43:73)
>
> And We shall bestow on them, of fruit and meat, anything they shall have satisfaction. (al-Tur 52: 22)
>
> In the Garden on high the fruits whereof (will hang in bunches) low and near, eat you and drink you with full satisfaction. (al-Haqqah 69: 22-24)
>
> Verily for the righteous there will be gardens enclosed, and grapevines. (al-Naba 78: 31-32)

Nonetheless, in explicating the above-quoted verses Abdullah Yusuf Ali makes it a point always to interpret these promised comforts of Paradise in terms of their being "metaphors"[12] "spiritual delights"[13] "types"[14] "allegory"[15] and "symbolism."[16]

He appears to be averse to appreciating the physical comforts of Paradise, though these are explicitly stated in the Quran. An instance in point is the following verse which makes mention of water and other refreshments of Paradise for the righteous:

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12 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 780, n. 2513.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1339, n. 4671.

13 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1196, n. 4062.

14 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1228, n. 4208.

15 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1436, n. 5056

16 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1599, n. 5654.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1675, n. 5905.

> The Companions of the Fire will call to the Companions of the Garden: "Pour down to us water or anything that God does provide for your sustenance." (al-A'raf 7: 50)

In his opinion, however, water represents "the crystal waters of the springs and rivers of God's pleasure."[17] Likewise the favours to be bestowed on the righteous in Paradise, as detailed in al-Rahman 55: 46-76, are dubbed as "the symbolism used to express the fruit of goodness or God."[18] So does the Quranic reference to *Kafur* (camphor) in the context of the beatific wine (al-Insan 76:05) in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's view "symbolically... represents a fountain in the Realm of Bliss."[19] In dealing with the vessels of silver and goblets of crystal, mentioned in the Quran (al-Insan 76: 15 and 16), he firmly maintains:

> As the whole thing is symbolical, gold or silver or crystal does not matter.[20]

His comments on other joys of Paradise, elaborately presented in the Quran (al-Insan 76: 17-21) and marked by an obvious physical form, are marred by a consistent use of such terms of reference as "metaphor" and "symbol."[21] "Gardens," "grapevines" and the "Cup" referred to in the Quran (al-Naba 78: 32,34), are explained by him thus:

> The supreme achievement is now described in three symbols. The first symbol is the enclosed Fruit Garden… Garden in its many aspects is the most frequent symbol adopted for Bliss... it (grape) yields wine the pure wine of divine love. The third symbol, the cup... full to the brim brings to our mind the unbounded bounty of God."[22]

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17 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 354, n. 1028.

18 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1480, n. 5212.

19 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1656, n. 5835.

20 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1658, n. 5847.

21 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1658, nn. 5849-5854.

22 Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 1675-6, nn. 5905-5908.

He deliberately avoids any discussion of the physical concomitants of the divine punishment in Hell.

Although the Quran sentences the killer of a believer to eternal damnation (al-Nisa 4: 93). Abdullah Yusuf Ali interprets the punishment in terms of its "spiritual consequences."[23] Similarly, the Quranic statement that the punishment meted out to the chiefs of unbelievers will be "double" (al-A'raf 7: 38) is elucidated by him thus:

> We must understand "ten times" and "double" figuratively, and not quantitatively.[24]

The pointed Quranic references to the sufferings incurred by various parts of the body such as the "sealing of the mouth and the speaking of hands and feet" (Ya Sin 36: 65) "the face receiving the brunt of Fire" (al-Zumar 39: 24) and "joining of legs" (al-Qiyamah 75: 29) are consistently construed by him as "metaphorical" or "symbolic."[25]

A glaring instance of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's twisted and far-fetched interpretation of one of the verses providing graphic details of the physical torments is as follows:

> (The stern command will say): "Seize you him, and bind you him, and burn you him in the blazing fire. Further make him march in a chain, whereof the length is seventy cubits." (al-Haqqah 69: 30-32)

However, for Abdullah Yusuf Ali, in the above-quoted verses,

> The effects of sins are described in words of glowing imagery (1) "Seize him," the first step of the sinner is that he loses his spiritual liberty, and becomes a slave to passion, prejudice, envy, hatred and all the brood of evil. 2) "Bind him," his hands are

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23 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 210, n. 612.

24 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 350, n. 1019.

25 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1184, n. 4011.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1244, n. 4280.
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1652, n. 5825.

> bound round his neck, all his powers and generous impulses are checked and his sympathies are dried up. 3) "Burn him in the Blazing Fire," he is then consumed in the Flames of Destruction, for which he made himself fit. 4) "Make him march in a chain" the consequence of sin ramify and extend, and it becomes a long chain, a chain seventy cubits long... "Seventy" implies an indefinitely large number.[26]

Other modes of penalty referred to in the Quran (al-Tawbah 9: 10, Yunus 10: 04, Ibrahim 14: 49-50 and al-Muddaththir 74:17), although bearing a marked physical description, are treated by him as a "spiritual penalty"[27] and accordingly explained in terms of "symbol"[28] and "metaphor."[29] His explanatory note on the "Fire whose fuel is man and stones, which is prepared for those who reject Faith" (Al-Baqarah 2:24), representing his mystical approach, almost negates the very existence of the Hellfire:

> If by your own efforts you cannot match the spiritual light, and yet contumaciously reject spiritual Faith, then there will be a fire in your soul, the punishment that burns up all your cherished idols.[30]

Moreover, according to Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "the Companions of fire" (al-Maida 5: 32) on whom the Quran has pronounced eternal damnation, would suffer only "spiritual torment,"[31] for the "Hell-Fire" (Ali 'Imran 3: 91) is a "symbol of penalty,"[32] So does he construe the "Blazing Fire kindled to fierce heat" (al-Takwir 81:12) as

> The inner Hell - an intense realization of spiritual anguish worse than the fiercest fire.[33]

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26 Ibid., Vol. II. P. 1601, n. 5661.

27 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 471, n. 1351.

28 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 484, n.1390.

29 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 633, nn. 1926-1928.

30 Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 22, n. 43.

31 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 251, n. 733.

32 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 147, n. 499.

33 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1695, n. 5980.

'Arsh' (the Throne) (al-A'raf 7: 17, al-Mumin 40: 07 and al-Haqqah 69: 17) and "Kursi" (the Seat) (Al-Baqarah 2: 255) are interpreted by him as "symbols of power and authority."[34]

Another fallacious stand taken by Abdullah Yusuf Ali relates to describing "Iblis" (Satan) as part of "the company of angels"[35] Whereas, according to the orthodox Muslim viewpoint derived from the Quran itself (al-Kahf 18: 50) Iblis was a jinn, as is evident from the works of Mawududi and Daryabadi, the leading traditional Muslim exegetes of the Quran:

> Literally Iblis is one who is extremely desperate. It is the name given to the jinn who disobeyed Allah and refused to bow down to Adam...[36]

He (Iblis) was not an angel but jinn, as expressly mentioned in the Quran (al-Kahf 18:50)[37]

Abdullah Yusuf Ali's views on the Quranic angelology are not also cognate with the orthodox Muslim viewpoint. In Al-Baqarah 2: 102 the Quran makes mention of Harut and Marut, the two angels sent down by Allah to teach men magic. Unnerved by this apparently anomalous Quranic statement that Allah directed angels to teach men such an abominable thing as magic, Abdullah Yusuf Ali takes recourse to pleading:

> The word 'angels" as applied to Harut and Marut is figurative. It (angel) means good men, of knowledge, science (or wisdom) and power.[38]

However, in his explanatory note on the point under discussion not only does Daryabadi adduce the angelhood of Harut and Marut but

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34 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 103, n. 298
Ibid., Vol. I, p. 355, n. 1032
Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1263, n. 4365
Ibid., Vol. III, p. 1599, n. 5651

35 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 319, n. 929

36 Mawdudi, *The Meaning of the Quran*, Vol. I, p. 68

37 Daryabadi, *The Holy Quran*, Vol. I, p. 98

38 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran* Vol. I, p. 45, n. 104

vindicates also the reason which accounts for the sending down of these angels for imparting men magic:

> in order that its nature (i.e. of magic and witchcraft) be explained and its mischief be demonstrated in full, and people may be weaned from the engulfing superstition, just as a physician acquires an intimate knowledge of diseases not, of course, to propagate but to combat them and just again as a police officer familiarizes himself with the ways of criminals and law-breakers with the sole object of checkmating them.[39]

Similarly, Abdullah Yusuf Ali insists that the two guardian angels, one sitting on the right and the other one the left, appointed to record one's actions (Qaf 50: 17) "must of course be taken figuratively."[40] Another instance in point is his comment on the jinns who listened to the Quran, as described in al-Jinn 72: 01. For Abdullah Yusuf Ali, these jinns are the

> people who were strangers in Arabia, but had in their own private way heard and believed in the Gospel of Islam.[41]

"The Record" (*Kitab Mubin*) (al-An'am 6: 59) too, is construed as

> The mystic Record… there is much mystic doctrine explained by beautiful metaphors and illustrations.[42]

While it is, no doubt, true that no authentic description of the real nature of some of the eschatological matters can be adduced, the definite, palpable physical form of the Quranic account, which is intelligible to human beings, should not be so ruthlessly ruled out, as Abdullah Yusuf Ali does. His views on the Quranic eschatology mark a big departure from the orthodox Muslim viewpoint, both doctrinal and linguistic.

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39 Daryabadi, *The Holy Quran*, Vol. 1, p. 188

40 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1412, n. 4953

41 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 1625, n. 5728

42 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 304, n. 880

Some other scholars too, have identified the flaws in and Yusuf Ali's works, particularly S.A. Rizvi[43] Q. Arfa[44] a group of Ulema from South Africa.[45] In the light of such criticism, Abdullah Yusuf Ali's work has been revised, of which two editions appeared in 1989 and 1990, brought out by Amana Corporation, USA[46] and Presidency of Islamic Researches, Saudi Arabia[47] respectively. What follows below is a critique on these two revised editions:

It is indeed gratifying to note that a host of Muslim institutions, namely the Amana Corporation in co-operation with the International Institute of Islamic Thought (USA) and Dar al-Ifta (Saudi Arabia) realized (curiously enough, almost at the same time) the need for a new, revised edition of Yusuf Ali's work. So 55 years after its first appearance and 40 years after Yusuf Ali's death we now have two revised editions of his work.

Before proceeding further, a word about the propriety of the exercise that involves some rewriting of a deceased author's work, removal of some of his material and the addition of new material, all changes to which the author did not subscribe. M. Hamidullah brands this venture downright 'dishonesty,' This judgement is, I think, a bit severe. The other option of a total withdrawal of the many earlier editions of this work or preventing future reprints is simply impracticable. Both the revised editions under discussion

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43 S.A.H. Rizvi, "Some Errors in Abdulah Yusuf Ali's English Translation of the Quran," *Muslim and Arab Perspectives*, New Delhi, India, 1:1 (October 1993), 4-19.

44 Q. Arafat, *Incorrect Equivalents Chosen by Yusuf Ali in his Translation of the Quran*. Leicester, UK, Arafat Publications, 1991.

45 *A Discussion on the Errors of Yusuf Ali* by Majlisul Ulema of South Africa. Transval, South Africa, n.d.

46 *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary*. New revised edition. Brentwood, Maryland, US, Amana Corporation, 1989, 1754 pages, ISBN: 091595750335.

47 *The Holy Quran: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary.* Revised and edited by Presidency of Islamic Researches, Ifta, Call and Guidance. Madina, King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex, 1990, 2082 pages.

have done a great service in rectifying errors in this widely-circulated work. There is perhaps no way besides revision to undo the damage done by the spread of Yusuf Ali's misleading and unorthodox commentary.

Let us now turn to the revision undertaken in the Amana Corporation edition. Quite inexplicably, and for reasons best known to the publisher, it gives no indication of who the editor(s) is (are) who took up this arduous job, nor, more significantly, does it say much about its rationale.

If a work is revised (especially without the author's approval) readers not unreasonably expect a clear explanation of the methodology and principles, and the main areas, of the revision- to understand the need for and to fully appreciate the changes and additions made. The need for such an explanation is the more urgent and as the work at issue is not a reference work whose data is being up-dated without comment, but the most popular English translation of and commentary on the Quran.

The 'Publisher's Note' speaks vaguely of 'an editorial board' that looked after 'overall editorial changes and revisions in style and format' (p. viii) and refers the reader to the 'Preface to the Revised Editions' but the 'Preface' (attributed to the International Institute of Islamic Thought) also evades the issue in making this generalized comment: "Revisions have been made in both the content and form of the original work" (p.ix). Instead, much is made of 'the dramatic change in style' in the revised edition. What this actually refers to is the use of a new Arabic typeface for the Quran text. The only reason stated for having revised the work is 'the clarification of certain explanations which were subjected to misinterpretation' and deletion (once again vaguely defined) of 'certain portions… due to its proneness to misinterpretation' (p.ix). The only acknowledged (and welcome) instances of changes relate to the substitution of 'Allah' for 'God' and 'Messenger' for "Apostle" (p.ix). The changes show an alertness to the nuances involved in religious terminology, but one wishes they had spelt out in some detail the considerations which compelled them to

make ‘frequent, and occasionally more substantial, changes’ in Yusuf Ali’s commentary.

Anyway, it is on comparing the revised, rather expurgated, edition with the earlier one that one is pleased to note that, in its revised form, Yusuf Ali’s work now stands almost completely free of the author’s apologetic, pseudo-rational and too much *tasawwuf*-oriented notes. The revision has been painstaking and masterly. A significant pointer to the parameters of the revision is the omission of three appendices, namely, (1) Allegorical interpretation of the story of Joseph, (2) Verse of Light - Mystic Interpretation and (3) the Muslim Heaven. For leaving out this material which garbled the Quranic message, the editor(s) deserve(s) every credit. Nonetheless, some material by way of replacement, particularly an authentic and unapologetic account of ‘the Muslim Heaven’ would have greatly enhanced the value of this revised edition.

As already hinted, many of Yusuf Ali’s views, as expressed in his commentary, run counter to the articles of Islamic faith. These fallacious views have been expunged and, in a few instances, replaced with a sound, correct Islamic viewpoint. For example, in the earlier edition, Yusuf Ali had said: “But insurance is not gambling, when conducted on business principles” (Al-Baqarah 2:219, n. 241). This grossly misleading statement has been justifiably dropped. Likewise, part of his misleading note on riba (usury) (Al-Baqarah 2:275, n. 324) has been omitted. However, since the omitted part is not replaced by setting forth the standard Islamic position on such a vital issue, the reader does not get any guidance. The obnoxious phrase ‘Children of One God’ in Yusuf Ali’s Introduction’ (C.6) has been replaced with ‘creatures of One God.’ Similar attention to detail inspired the substitution, for the objectionable phrase: “God’s ‘nature,’ with God’s ‘attributes’ (al-Furqan 25:19, n. 3074); the expression laden with Christian connotation ‘man of God’ has become ‘Prophet of Allah’ (al-Shu’ara’ 26:114, n. 3190 and Y Sin 36:16, n. 3961). Yusuf Ali’s undue liberty in translating Zubur (pl. of Zabur) as ‘Books’ (al-Shu’ara’ 26:196, n. 3226) has been restrained to, simply, ‘the

revealed Books.' Similarly the editor(s) can be credited for omitting Yusuf Ali's preposterous explanation of prayer postures in terms of symbolism (al-Shu'ara' 26:219, n. 3235); for scrupulously editing his apologetic note on Zaynab's marriage (al-Ahzab 33: 37, n. 3723); for correcting his views on the Islamic norms for female modesty (al-Ahzab 33: 59, nn. 3764-3766 and 3767); for dropping his far-fetched allusions to Western literature in explaining the lower heaven (al-Saffat 37: 6, n. 4035); for accurately defining *Sai'qa* by deleting Yusuf Ali's metaphorical explanation (al-Zumar 39: 68, n. 4343); for discarding references to the 'mystical meaning of love for all mankind' and of the divine love (al-Shura 42: 23, n. 4560); for pruning his unorthodox views on *jihad* (al-Jathiyah 45: 14, n. 4749); for omitting his false interpretation of *Thamarat* (heavenly fruits) in metaphorical terms of reference (Muhammad 47: 15, n. 4834); for describing the Hudaybiyah Treaty in a much broader perspective (al-Fath 48: 26, n. 4907), and for expurgating Yusuf Ali's false interpretation of *Ghilman* (al-Tur 52:24, n. 5058). In all, as a result of the revision, this edition no longer suffers from Yusuf Ali's dogmatic presuppositions and enables fresh access to the study of the Quran.

Notwithstanding the assiduousness of the editor(s), in such an ambitious undertaking some lapses are inevitable. As indicated earlier, the central concern of the revision was to free the work of Yusuf Ali's pseudo-rational and apologetic commentary. This has largely been achieved, but one or two of Yusuf Ali's misleading notes and asides remain. For example:

a. In explaining the Quranic directive about fasting when traveling (Al-Baqarah 2: 184, n. 190) Yusuf Ali over-presents his individual, personal opinion in the face of established *fiqhi* rulings. The editors should have better abridged this note, as they have done in other instances. A personal preference, not clearly distinguished as such from the traditional, consensus rulings may be confusing to the average reader of the Quran.

b. Although Yusuf Ali's explanation of Paradise and Hell as 'symbolic' has been revised, some few notes of similar import

have somehow escaped. Defining hell-fire, Yusuf Ali comments: 'The Fire is a symbol of penalty' (Al 'Imran 3:191, n. 499). Similarly, he defines *Hamim* and *Ghassaq* as 'symbols of grievous penalty' (Yunus 10:4, n. 1390), and *jannat* and its rewards as 'symbolical of the Bliss in the Hereafter' (al-Furqan 25:10, n. 3065, Ya Sin 36: 55-8, n. 4001, Sad 38: 51, n. 4208, al-Dhariyat 51: 15, n. 4998 and al-Haqqah 69: 23, n. 5654).

c. As indicated earlier, Yusuf Ali's use of 'God' and 'Apostle' has been replaced with 'Allah' and 'Messenger.' Otherwise, however, the text of his translation has not been altered. Deletions and changes are restricted to only his commentary. It is therefore surprising to note that the correct translation of a part of the verse (al-Nisa' 4:65) in the earlier edition appears incorrectly in the revised edition. Moreover, some inaccuracies in Yusuf Ali's translation of the Quranic text, as for example, in al-Tawbah 9: 26 and al-Muminun 23:4 have been simply carried over from the earlier edition.

Generally speaking, the revision consists of mainly expunging material. In a few instances, however, fresh notes have been supplied, as for example, nn. 2111, 2954 and 3112. Typically, the editor(s) show(s) sound knowledge of the subject-matter and avoid(s) Yusuf Ali's errors of perspective. In a couple of instances, however, the notes regrettably fall short. As for example, in n. 929 on the Jinn the attempt to tone down Yusuf Ali's queer interpretation by deletions and omissions is not quite successful: dropping the original notes altogether, as in other instances, and a new set of notes with a reliable account of the Jinn would have been better. There was a need also for a detailed and more convincing explanatory note on *Dhikr* (Qaf 50: 8, n. 4948).

Though the revision has been thorough in both conception and execution, the printing of this work appears to have been rushed. It is flawed by numerous mistakes in misnumbered references and index entries. Most of the cross-references to other Surah numbers, particularly in the Index, are wrong. It becomes all the more serious in view of the fact that for a thematic study many students rely only

on the Index for references. In just one Index entry of 'Allah,' I noted, at least 15 wrong references in that a theme is attributed to a Surah in which it simply does not appear. Another equally irksome feature of the alphabetically arranged Index is the inclusion of two entirely unrelated subjects under one main entry. As for example, 'Balance' figures under the entry 'Bakkah' (p. 1728), 'Fig' under 'Fear' (p. 1732), 'Star' under 'Spoils of War' (p. 1751), 'Umrah' under 'Ummah' (p. 1752) and 'Zakariya' under 'Zayd' (p. 1754). I cannot conceive of any justification for this bizarre practice. The publishers would do well to insert a new, error-free Index in remaining copies of this edition and in any future ones. The Index (pages 1723 to 1754) is given on the contents page as appearing on pages 1754 to 1757-an obvious typesetting error.

The other revised edition, brought out by the Presidency of Islamic Researches, Ifta, Call and Guidance (Saudi Arabia) differs from the Amana Corporation edition on only these significant counts: it has fewer appendices; omits Yusuf Ali's Preface, his note on 'Commentaries on the Quran,' his bibliography and his Introductory Commentary; and does not repeat the above-mentioned mistakes related to nn. 499, 929, 1390, 4001, 4208, 4998 and 5654. Strangely enough, it does not even bear the name of Yusuf Ali as translator or author on the title page. Only in the Preface by the Presidency is there a reference to Yusuf Ali's work which was chosen for revision and correction. By contrast there is an account (detailed to the point of being obtrusive) of at least four committees which took up this task of revision. As a matter of fact, apart from changing Yusuf Ali's use of 'God' and 'Apostle' into 'Allah' and 'Messenger' the whole translation of the Quranic text has been simply lifted from Yusuf Ali's earlier edition, and the revision in notes is almost the same as in the Amana Corporation edition. So the claims in the Preface about 'correcting,' 'comparing,' 'adopting best expression,' 'introducing fresh expression' and 'checking the notes vigilantly' in this 'enormous task' may be charitably passed over as descriptions of the editors' hopes, not as accurate reflections of the finished product. The

publishers should, at least, have had the courtesy to credit Yusuf Ali with the authorship of this life-long work of his.

As already indicated the nature and range of revision is remarkably similar to that in the Amana Corporation edition. What has been said above about its strengths and weaknesses is largely applicable to this edition as well. There are distinct features, however, and we shall restrict our comments to these.

First, the editors here do not mince words in setting out the rationale of their revision to 'clear any misconceptions regarding the articles of faith, varying juristic opinions and thoughts not in conformity with the sound Islamic point of view' (p.vii). Prompted by these considerations they have slashed the number of Appendices from 14 in Yusuf Ali's original, and 11 in the Amana Corporation edition, to only 7. Granted that these Appendices contained material dissonant with the sound Islamic position, the editors could have been more forthcoming in inserting some new material. If a revision carried out by a host of specialist committees over ten years fails to provide authentic information, it reflects feebly on their positive scholarship.

In the Amana edition, any deletions or occasional additions made in Yusuf Ali's commentary are indicated by the symbol 'R' (revised). Although almost identical revision has been made in this edition, there is no indication whatever to show whether a note is an original one by Yusuf Ali or has been edited. As well as dropping Yusuf Ali's Preface and his other introductory notes on the Quran which hardly contained any of his unsound views, his highly useful note on punctuation, quite helpful for non-Arab readers of the Quranic text, has also been omitted for no apparent reason.

Fortunately, the Index of this edition has none of the mistakes found in the Amana edition. However, this edition is marred by numerous mistakes of transliteration. It is altogether bewildering that the editors have not followed their own system of transliteration, listed on page ix; an example is the transliteration of Luqman as 'Lukman' (p.8); most Surah titles are similarly

mistransliterated. One hardly expected an edition published by such prestigious Arab institutions, namely, Dar al-Ifta and King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex, Madinah, to suffer from numerous mistakes of transliteration.

These drawbacks apart, both revised editions mark an important step in the right direction of making the Quran accessible to non-Arabs in the form of an authentic translation and commentary. However, it is hoped that Muslim institutions will soon bring out new, independent and authentic, translations of the Quran in the major world languages, not only English.

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Number of Editions: More than 200

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6
Daryabadi, Abdul Majid
The Holy Quran
(1957)

Born in a family of devout Muslim scholars, Daryabadi (1892-1977) graduated in 1912 in Philosophy from the University of Lucknow. He contributed scores of books and articles in both English and Urdu, which present Islam as the life-giving and life-ennobling faith. Apart from his English translation, he authored also in Urdu his *Tafsir-i Majidi*, which is an altogether independent work.

Apart from being representative of the orthodox Muslim viewpoint, another distinctive feature of his works is his thorough critical study of comparative religion, especially the Bible, with a view to vindicating the veracity of the Quran, Maryam Jameelah, a Jewish-born Muslim scholar has placed on record her debt to Daryabadi's treatment of comparative religion which prompted her to form a positive idea of Islam, which culminated in her acceptance of Islam. Daryabadi's exercise of comparing and contrasting several Quranic passages with their counterparts in the Bible aim at refuting the Orientalist/Missionary allegation that the Quran is a poor replica of the Bible. His work stands out also for its faithful and idiomatic translation, seeking to retain the original Arabic syntax, and even the word order in his English version. Being conversant with the Western worldview he succeeds in addressing the concerns of the Western - educated Muslims, and non-Muslims and in elucidating the life-enriching message of the Quran.

Daryabadi had completed his English translation of the Quran in the 1940s. However, it could come out in 1957. Owing to his Indo-Pakistani origin and lack of a suitable publisher, his work went unnoticed for a long time. Its revised, posthumous edition was published 1981-85, which is discussed below. Moreover, an

abridged version of his work has been brought out by Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK, which has been reissued thrice since its publication in 2001.

It is gratifying that Mawlana Abdul Majid Daryabadi's revised translation of the Quran and his commentary *Tafsirul Quran* (Lucknow, India, Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 4 volumes, 1981-1985, 2035 pages) has been brought out at the behest of Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, especially because the earlier edition *The Holy Quran* (Taj Company, Lahore, 1957) was marred by numerous typographical errors, an irksome page setting and use of archaic biblical expressions. For, Daryabadi's outstanding contribution to the Quranic studies has remained largely unacknowledged. He is the first Muslim scholar to have contributed a commentary in English, which is in total accord with the consensus view of the Ummah. Moreover, far from being a loose or lax paraphrase, his translation is faithful to the original to the extent possible. Another distinction of Daryabadi's work is the abundance of material on comparative religion gleaned painstakingly from mostly primary sources. Thirdly, in sharp contrast to other leading Muslim English exegetes of the day such as Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad, Daryabadi's comments on certain Quranic teachings, like eschatology, polygamy or slavery, do not smack of any apologia. In fact his cogent notes on such issues, along with references to the Bible and other sources of modern scholarship not only bring to the fore and reinforce the eternal message and force of the Quran, but also help allay the doubts agitating, in particular, the minds of Muslims exposed to the currents of Western intellectuality.

Gifted with a deep insight into the nuances of the Quranic expressions and a thorough and first-hand knowledge of the latest anthropological, archaeological and sociological studies, Daryabadi is highly successful in explicating the significance of some enigmatic Quranic statements, which have been overlooked by many others. Let us take a few examples.

The Quranic title of *Nasara* (Al-Baqarah 2:62), translated carelessly as 'Christians' even by Muslim translators, has been rendered by Daryabadi as 'Nazarenes' on the ground that 'the Nazarenes or the primitive Christians were the followers of the pre-Pauline Church, not quite like the present-day Christians of the Pauline variety' (Vol. I, p. 13A). In another place, Daryabadi establishes the veracity of the Quranic reference to the miracle of twelve springs gushing forth from a rock in Sinai as Moses stuck it with his staff (Al-Baqarah 2:60): 'this wonderful rock, real, not fictitious, exists even to this day. It stands from 10 ft to 15 ft high, in the wide valley of the Leja, under the Ras of Sufsafeh' (Vol. I, p. 12B). It is interesting that while Muhammad Ali denies this incident outright, Yusuf Ali ascribes it to a local tradition and interprets its as a parable. Again, referring to the Quranic statement - 'and Sulaiman blasphemed not' (Al-Baqarah 2:102) - Daryabadi writes: "The Jews, true to their traditions of ingratitude and malevolence have not hesitated to malign their own hero and national benefactor, Prophet Solomon (on him be peace!) and to accuse him of the most heinous of all offences -idolatry (The First Book of Kings, ii, iv, ix and x)... The Quran upholds the honour of all Prophets of God, to whatever race or age they may belong..." (Vol. I, p. 18A). Daryabadi alone, thus, explains the enigma, as blasphemy is unthinkable in the context of a prophet. He also points out that the Quranic statement about Prophet Solomon's piety is corroborated by modern biblical studies which show that 'Solomon was a sincere worshipper of Yahawa...' (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, London 14th edition, Volume 20, p. 952). Similarly, one may mention Daryabadi's treatment of matters like the Quranic address to the Children of Israel (Al-Baqarah 2:40, n. 173, Volume I, pp. 26-7); the teaching of magic by two angels, Harut and Marut (Al-Baqarah 2: 102, n. 447), Volume I, p. 68); and the Quranic denunciation of direction in worship (Al-Baqarah 2: 177, n. 166; Volume I, pp. 109-10).

Daryabadi's explanatory notes are characterized by profuse references to the classical Muslim authorities on exegesis and lexicography which makes it a unique and pleasant amalgam of the

classical and the modern in a highly concise way. Although the present revised translation does not manage to retain the original Arabic word-order in English as did the earlier one, it is more refreshing in that the biblical expressions have been replaced by the modern ones.

Although Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi has stated in his Introduction that 'certain additions made by the author have also been incorporated in this edition' (p. xvii), the reviewer failed to notice any addition apart from the revised translation. The only additions are: four new titles in the Bibliography, an exhaustive Index to each volume, and five appendices by Sayyid Mawdudi, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Sher Muhammad Syed and S.G. Muhiuddin. Since the present edition is a posthumous publication, these additions deserve special notice. Nadwi's Introduction is quite illuminating, though it is marred by poor translation. His Appendix, 'Seven Sleepers' (Vol. III, pp. 65-9) attempts to establish that the Seven Sleepers retired to solitude during the reign of Hadrian (117-138) and woke up in the days of Theodosius (408-450). He, thus, substantiates the Quranic statement by marshalling assiduously an array of historical evidence. His other Appendix, 'Identification of Zul-Qarnain' (Vol. III, pp. 70-3) is not, however, so convincing. Daryabadi's view that Zul-Qarnain stands for Alexander the Great, is contrary to Nadwi's and reiterates Abul Kalam Azad's view that it refers to Cyrus, the Iranian emperor. The best approach to such a problem, in Syed Qutub's words, lies in concentrating on drawing lessons from the event rather than on historicizing it. Sher Muhammad Syed's Appendix documents very well Daryabadi's account of the "historicity of Haman as mentioned in the Quran" (Vol. III, pp. 359-70) as well as refutes the charges leveled against the Quran by Orientalists on this count. Its presentation, however, is very poor. S.G. Mohiuddin's Appendix "Was Muhammad Literate?" (Vol. III, pp. 495-503) documents the unletteredness of the Prophet and takes to task, admirably, certain self-appointed scholars on Islam for dubbing this Quranic assertion as allegorical. The Appendix, however, is placed wrongly at the end of Surah XXXV, instead of near verse 48 of Surah XXIX. Sayyid Mawdudi's Appendix (Vol. I,

pp. 201-2) gives a lucid account of the differences between bai and riba and of the rationale behind the Quranic prohibition of riba in whatsoever form. Though the source has not been indicated, most of the points have been drawn from his *Tafhim al-Quran* in Urdu.

Printing of a Quranic commentary is a difficult task; the Academy has done a good job. Some shortcomings, however, need to be pointed out in the hope that they would be taken care of in future reprints. Some spelling mistakes are still there, though not on the same scale as in the earlier edition. The division into *juz* renders it difficult to consult the present edition. A continuous serial numbering of the notes, instead of separate numbering in each *juz*, could have made the task of reference and getting easier. Yet, all students of the Quran must be grateful to Nadwi and the Academy for placing in their hands a very valuable work on the Quranic exegesis.

Publication details of the first edition:

Lahore, Pakistan, Taj Company, 1957, 2 Volumes, Vol.1: 456 pages and Vol.2: 513 pages.

Number of Editions: 8

Other Reviews:

- M.A.M., "Review on Daryabadi's English Translation of the Quran," *Islamic Culture* 18:1 (1944), 103-104.
- M.H., "Review on Daryabadi's English Translation of the Quran," *Islamic Culture* 20:3 (1946), 337-338.
- Jeffrey, Arthur, "The Holy Quran by Abdul Majid Daryabadi," *Muslim World* 35:4 (1945), 160-161.

7
Nuri, Khadim Rahman
The Running Commentary of the Holy Quran
(1964)

Khadim Rahman Nuri (fl. 1960s) introduces his work as a 'very literal and pure translation with the most authentic and scientific comments, accompanied by a unique Index.' The work, however, delivers little of what it promises. It goes without saying that a 'very literal 'translation' is by its nature self-defeating. Only those unaware of the original turn to a translation. However, a too literal version does not advance their understanding. Faithfulness to the original should nonetheless be the translator's objective. It becomes all the more imperative in the case of the Word of God. For unsuspecting readers will take the translated version, itself, as the Word of God. Nuri pays scant regard to these commonplace norms about the art and craft of translation. His zeal for 'scientific comments' is equally misplaced and misleading. He is, however, to be complimented for having compiled an exceptionally comprehensive Index (pp. 1025-1144) to the contents of the Quran, which may legitimately be hailed as 'a unique Index.'

Nuri has introduced another odd feature in his translation, which he refers to 'under-bracket comments' and accordingly his work is paraded as 'the running commentary.' This arrangement has, however, rendered the work into a very clumsy, reader-unfriendly work. This point is eloquently borne out by the following illustration, where Nuri's translation of verse 5 of Surah al-Fatihah reads:

> (Unlike Matt. 6:11) guide us on the (Middle, hence) Right Path (90: 10:18, i.e., the Buddhist Majhima Path, from our own tendency of leaning to either extreme: the rejection of the exaggeration: until we reach our great spiritual goal of perfection) ... (p.2).

Notwithstanding being the testament to Nuri's sound knowledge of comparative religion, as embodied in the above passage, the average Muslim reader can hardly relate the above to the meaning and message of verse 5 of Surah al-Fatihah which he recites five times every day in his Prayers.

Nuri's work is marred by the poor level of English. It is disfigured by an overuse of idioms which may not be readily comprehensible for the average reader. For example, in translating verses 2-10 of Surah al-Nisa, Nuri has employed as many as 14 idioms, including the following highly uncommon ones: 'fine words butter no parsnips,' 'better half a loaf under marriage tie than no loaf in taking liberties,' 'he that gets money before he gets wit, will be but a short while master of it,' 'not cut off lawful inheritor with a shilling,' and 'a thistle is a fat salad for an ass's mouth' (pp. 115-17).

Nuri's preference for archaic biblical pronouns such as 'thou,' and 'thine,' etc., is another stumbling block in drawing freely upon his work. In sum, although Nuri's work has been compiled with the best intentions and for the cause of spreading the message of the Quran, it fails miserably in realizing its goal, not least because of the serious defects in their execution.

Publication details of the first edition:
Sufi Hamsaya, Shillong, India, n.d., 1144 pages.

Number of Editions: 1

8
Tariq, Abdur Rahman and Gilani, Ziauddin Ahmad
The Holy Quran Rendered into English
(1966)

This translation lacks any distinctive feature. It contains only a few explanatory notes. Not much, therefore, can be said about the approach or mindset of the translators. They offer traditional explanations of a few things Quranic in a simple way. Their stance is anchored deep in the mainstream understanding of the Quran. They state their objective of having rendered the Quran into English "in modern and eloquent English, conveying largely the exact meaning of the Arabic text." This claim is only partly true. They, no doubt, represent the traditionally accepted meaning of the Quran and are faithful, in large measure, to the Quranic text in their rendering. They, however, fail to deliver the other part of their promise owing to their poor grip over the English idiom, nuances of meaning and vocabulary. Their presentation and style are not appealing. Readers familiar with academic English may be even put off, owing to the lack of the translators' exposure to scholarly discourse.

Commenced in 1963, it appeared in parts, and the final 30th part was published in 1966. In the same year the entire work was published in two volumes. Its 30th part was reprinted by Islamic Publication Bureau in 1983. Nothing is on record about the issue of any other edition of this work. This clearly shows that it has not been in circulation. No biographical information about the translators is available either. Only this much is known that both the translators were traditionalist Pakistani Muslim writers who embarked upon this translation project and completed it in 1966.

This translation has gone almost completely unnoticed. Although it is a pre-1980 publication, it does not find any mention in the otherwise definitive, *World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Quran: Printed Translations* 1515-1980 (Istanbul, Turkey, OIC Research Centre, 1986).

Publication details of the first edition:
Lahore, Pakistan, Sirajuddin. 2 Volumes.

Number of Editions: 1

9
Mawdudi, Syed Abul Ala
The Meaning of the Quran
(1967-1988)

Mawdudi's (1903-1979) *tafsir Tafhim al-Quran* (completed in 1972), originally in Urdu in six huge volumes, is one of the most influential and popular works which has promoted a better understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran, especially in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Its English translation was taken up by Chaudhary Muhammad Akbar in 1967 and after his death, Abdul Aziz Kamal took over as the head of the translators' board. It took them twenty years to bring out its complete English version. Its other much improved and scholarly English version is being brought out by the leading Islamic academic institution in the West, the Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK. Until 2010, however, only 9 out of the total projected 18 volumes have come out. What makes the Foundation edition, ably and assiduously translated and edited by an eminent Islamic scholar, Professor Zafar Ishaq Ansari, Pakistan, stand out above not only the earlier Pakistan edition but also most of the English translations of the Quran by Muslims, are its elegant presentation and academic credentials.

This work is truly remarkable, for its author, the distinguished Muslim scholar and thinker, Syed Mawdudi's profound understanding of the Quran, his deep insights into the Quranic worldview, and his wide ranging scholarship embracing the strands of both the classical and modern knowledge. Also, this translation surpasses other ventures in the field in terms of its extensive and coherent exposition of the social, political, legal and economic teachings of the Quran. It succeeds laudably in dispelling the doubts of modern educated Muslims, while drawing upon authentic Islamic sources, particularly Hadith and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) collections. Mustansir Mir, a reviewer of Syed Mawdudi's tafsir, refers to this feature thus: "Above all, *Tafhim* is modern in that its author evinces an

awareness of the situations and problems of the present age... And its author addresses himself to many concerns and questions that a twentieth century reader Muslim or non-Muslim - of the Quran is likely to have."[1]

Its presentation is markedly reader-friendly. Apart from containing an extensive Introduction which prepares readers mentally for grasping the Quran better, each Surah is prefaced with its overview, discussing its period of revelation, its contextual setting and its themes and subject matter. It thus underscores the thematic unity and coherence of the Quran, as it points to the linkages amid Surahs and their essentially same message to readers. Appended to the work are copious notes which Mir places into these three categories: "explanatory, integrative, and critical."[2] Mawdudi himself, however, makes this modest claim:

> I have scrupulously avoided introducing in the explanatory notes any subject that might distract the reader from the Quran. I have written notes only on two kinds of occasions: 1) When I felt that the reader would require an explanation, ask a question, or entertain some kind of doubt and, 2) Where I was afraid that the reader would not pay sufficient attention to certain verses, and as a result, would fail to grasp their true significance.[3]

Another hallmark of his this work is that it offers a lucid, fluent paraphrasing of the Quranic text, without deviating from the original. It is thus much better than those scrupulously literal translations which are often not comprehensible to the uninitiated readers of the Quran.

Throughout his work Mawdudi's aim is to project the Quran as the Book of guidance *par excellence*, Islam as a complete, perfect system of life and the relevance of Islam in our times. So doing, he, at times, delves into what Mir brands as "the political type of

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1 Mustansir Mir, "Some Features of Mawdudi's *Tafhim al-Quran*," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 2: 2 (December 1985), p. 235.

2 Ibid., p. 240

3 Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding the Quran*. Translated and Edited by Zafar Ishaq Ansari. Delhi, Markazi Maktaba Islami, 2004, p.4.

meaning" of the Quran. In view of his close association with the turbulent political vicissitudes in the newly founded state of Pakistan in his capacity as the founder chief of Jamat, Islami, Pakistan, some of his detractors tend to dismiss his Quranic exegesis as part of his political design. Sectarianism in the Muslim community, especially of the Indo-Pak subcontinent, accounts also for its unacceptability in certain quarters.

As already stated, the incomplete Islamic Foundation edition of this work entitled *Towards Understanding the Quran* excels the complete Pakistani one under review here, on many counts. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, the translator and editor of the former, being well versed in Arabic, English and Urdu and the Quranic scholarship, both classical and modern, has captured the spirit and idiom of the Urdu original in his rendering. Furthermore, the Foundation edition is adorned with these highly valuable and helpful scholarly aids: Maps, Glossary of Quranic terms and concepts, Biographical Notes on the persons referred to in Mawdudi's commentary, and exhaustive Name and Subject Indexes. An early publication of all the volumes by the Foundation will contribute much to a better understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran - a task which Mawdudi's translation and explanatory notes seek to accomplish.

Publication details of the first edition:

Lahore, Pakistan, Islamic Publications Ltd. 1967-1988. 16 Vols. 3795 pages

Number of Editions: 1

Other Reviews:

Mir, Mustansir "Some Features of Mawdudi's Tafhim al-Quran," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 2: 2 (December 1985), 233-244.

Nadvi, S.H.H. "Review," *Muslim World Book Review* 10: 1 (Autumn 1989) 3-6.

10
Latif, Syed Abdul
Al-Quran
(1969)

Syed Abdul Latif (d. c. 1975), after completing his early education in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, India, earned his doctorate from the University of London in 1924. He made a mark in the field of Quranic scholarship in English, as he translated into English the leading Indian Islamic scholar, Abul Kalam Azad's incomplete Urdu *tafsir, Tarjuman al-Quran* (London, Asia Publishing House, 1962-1967). Moreover, he authored *The Mind al-Quran Builds* (1952), which contains some insights into the Quranic ethics and value system.

In 1969 he embarked upon his translation of the Quran. His approach to translation, in his words, is to bring into sharper relief "the unified idea connoted by the entire sentence," rather than to translate "the verses of the Quran... word by word and clause by clause." This he achieves by filling the gaps in parenthesis. As a result, his venture is distinct from some strictly literal translations of the day. However, at places, his personal opinions and preferences have found their way into his explanatory notes which are printed along with his rendering of the Quranic text. Needless to add, some of his views are not endorsed by the Quranic text. This flaw is discerningly noted thus by William A. Bijlefeld:

> While in many cases single words inserted by the translator in parenthesis are helpful to clarify the meaning, in other instances the additions become personal explanatory notes.

Bijelfeld cites some instances to illustrate the above.

This major flaw apart, this work contains an excellent and exhaustive prefatory note, "Approach to the Study of the Quran." The absence of footnotes in general is offset partly by his

comprehensive Index. For example, the entry on "Wealth" is subdivided into as many as fourteen categories.

Owing to the lack of explanatory notes much cannot be said about the author's mindset and his approach to things Quranic. Since his translation was brought out by a little known publisher in India and as its only one edition came out, it has gone largely unnoticed. Its copies are found in only few libraries.

To sum up, this translation underscores the author's pious and noble desire to convey the message of the Quran in a format readily intelligible to the target readership. With his mastery over the English language and idiom he could articulate the message well. However, it is a pity that he does little to spell out what the Quranic message is. His translation is, therefore, of not much help to those new to the Quran.

Publication details of the first edition:

Hyderabad, India, Academy of Islamic Studies, 1969. 579 pages.

Number of Editions: 1

Other Reviews:

Bijlefeld, William A. "Review on *al*-Quran, rendered into English by Syed Abdul Latif," *Muslim World 65* (1975), 292-293.

11
Ali, Hashim Amir
The Message of the Quran Presented in Perspective
(1974)

Hashim Amir Ali (d.c. 1970s) states that he was inspired by his teacher, Mirza Abul Fazl (1865-1956) an obscure, early Muslim English translator of the Quran to adopt a tendentiously unconventional approach to the Quranic text, especially in relation to its received Surah order, which he flaunts as "the perspective presentation of the Quran."

Without any regard for the chronology of Quranic Surahs or for the sanctity of the traditional Surah order devised by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself under divine instruction, Ali has the audacity to rearrange the Quranic text into the following five Books:

Book	I	The Portal, "Al-Fatihah,"
Book	II	The Enlightenment, "al-Ruh" containing 18 earliest Makkan Surahs,
Book	III	The Guidance, "al-Huda" comprising 36 early Makkan Surahs,
Book	IV	The Book, "al-Kitab" consisting of 36 late Makkan Surahs, and
Book	V	The Balance, "al-Mizan" in which are grouped together 24 Madinan Surahs.

Worse, the first three Books, according to Ali, illustrate "how a chosen individual was matured and groomed by the Quran for the task entrusted to him." For him, these first three Books "faintly replicate" the Psalms (*Zabur*) whereas Book IV represents "a strong resemblance to... the Turat (the Torah)." Book V, according

to his whim, is marked by "several parallels with the Injil (the Gospels)." He fails to substantiate these shades of the Quranic text on the basis of any credible evidence.

The traditional 558 sections of the Quran, popularly known as *roku'* in the Indo-Pak subcontinent have been recast by him into 600 sections, with each one of these signifying a Quranic theme. In other words, the Quran, according to his reckoning, contains only 600 themes. Ali might have been prompted to carry out this daring exercise by his sincere desire to bring out the thematic unity of the Quran. However, it goes without saying that many Quranic scholars have successfully achieved this goal, without disturbing, in the slightest, the traditional Surah order of the Quran.

In his Review, even the Orientalist William A. Bijlefeld expresses his disapproval of Ali's unconventional approach. "... [it] leaves me puzzled on more than one count."[1]

As to Ali's understanding of the meanings of the Quran, it raises more questions than it feebly seeks to answer, perhaps out of his predilection for Inter Faith engagement. Here are some instances of his bizarre translation marred by scant regard for the wording or thrust of the Quranic text. For example, the opening verses of Surah al-Fatihah is mistranslated by him thus: "The Command is for Allah alone: the Nourisher of all communities! (He whom some call) the Rahman, (some), the Rahim!" Likewise *basmalah*, usually rendered as "In the name of Allah Most Compassionate, Most Merciful," appears in this twisted, almost beyond recognition form: "In the name of Allah (the Supreme Deity of the Arabs, who is known as) the Rahman (by the Christians and as) the Rahim (by the Jews).

Since his translation is not supplemented with notes, nothing more could be said with certainty about his other dogmatic presuppositions. However, his vain and objectionable attempt at recasting the received Surah order smacks of the Orientalists'

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[1] William A. Bijlefeld, *The Message of the Quran* by Hashim, Amir Ali," *Muslim World* 65 (1975), p. 294.

influence on him. So doing, he appears to be followings perhaps unintentionally, in the footsteps of the Orientalist translators J. M. Rodwell and Richard Bell who, driven by their polemical zeal, sought to discredit the traditional Surah order and made some wild guesses about the chronology and history of the Quranic text. In comparison to them, Ali is decidedly a well-meaning person who wanted to highlight the thematic unity of the Quran through his rearrangement of Surahs.

Notwithstanding Ali's tall claim of having produced a ground-breaking work, it was issued only once. Needless to add, his outrageous move was spurned by the students and scholars of the Quran alike.

Publication details of the first edition:

Rutland, VA, USA, Charles E. Tuttle, 1974. 600 pages, ISBN: 0-804880976-3.

Number of Editions: 1

Other Reviews:

- Bijlefeld, William A. "Review on *The Message of the Quran* by Hashim Amir Ali," *Muslim World* 65 (1975), 293-294.

12
Salahuddin, Pir
The Wonderful Koran
(1971)

Being a scion of an influential family of Punjab in, Pakistan, Pir Salahuddin (b. 1915) obtained the highest degrees in law and was selected as a civil servant. Notwithstanding his long, distinguished career in Pakistan civil service he devoted himself to the study of Islam and authored three books - the translations of the Quran into both Urdu and English, a work on Prophet Muhammad's *Sira* and a reference work on the Quran.

Salahuddin's English translation regrettably does not have any remarkable feature to recommend itself for study. The translation is in plain, fairly presentable English and is supplemented by explanatory notes which he has drawn from classical *tafasir*. For reasons best known to him, he has cited passages upon passages in Arabic, lifted from authentic *tafasir*. Those possessing such an advanced level of knowledge of Arabic as to follow these in original would better consult first-hand the primary sources on *tafasir*. The English-speaking readers, the supposed target readership, cannot derive any benefit from these copious quotations in Arabic. The author should have been more discerning in including such superfluous material. This blemish apart, he succeeds, to some extent, in capturing the meaning and message of the Quran and in articulating the same in readable English. On this particular count, his work excels many translations produced in the Indian subcontinent which are marred by their atrocious use of the English language.

Appended to Salahuddin's translation is a long Preface in which he explains how he has tackled and decoded the Arabic text and its nuances in rendering these into a foreign tongue. He discusses well the stylistic features of the Quranic text and his translation approach and methodology. His prefatory note on "Hell and Heaven," however, is teeming with banalities, does not enlighten

the readers. He presses home the point that "whereas heaven is a place of everlasting abode, hell is a temporary abode." Instead of speculating on matters related to al-Ghayb (what lies beyond the realm of the human sense perception) which is neither fruitful nor desirable one should accept wholeheartedly what the Quran and Hadith tell about such matters. On the whole, Salahuddin's work is weighed down by both pedantry and banality.

Late Arfaque Malik, a London-based solicitor, who was an authority on the bio-bibliographic study of the English translators of the Quran, informed me in 1986 that Salahuddin Pir was a Qadyani. However, there is no internal evidence in his translation or his explanatory notes which establishes his Qadyani leanings. M.H. Khan, another writer on the English translators of the Quran, makes no reference to Salahuddin's Qadyani credentials though he delves deep into his biography. Nor does he place Salahuddin in the category of the Qadyani translators. On the contrary, he includes him among Muslim translators.[1] Given this, it is difficult to brand him as a Qadyani translator.

In the light of his work Salahuddin appears as a conscientious student of Quran, gifted with deep and wide familiarity with *tafsir* corpus. He had, no doubt, an ardent desire to disseminate the message of the Quran. It is an altogether different point, however, that he could not manage to deliver the same in a very presentable way.

His English translation was printed only once, and that too, under the aegis of an obscure publisher in the small town of Aminabad, Punjab, Pakistan. This explains partly why his work has not received any critical attention.

Publication details of the first edition:

Aminabad, Punjab, Pakistan, Rafter-i Zamana Publication, 1971. 631 pages.

Number of Editions: 1

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[1] M. H. Khan, "English Translations of the Holy Quran: A Bio-Bibliographic Study," *Islamic Quarterly* 2 (1986), p. 90.

13
Al-Hilali, Muhammad Taqui al-Din and Khan, M. Muhsin
Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Quran in the English Language
(1977)

To be precise it is not an altogether new translation; its earlier version entitled: *Explanatory English Translation of the Holy Quran: A Summarized Version of Ibn Kathir Supplemented by At-Tabari with Comments from Sahih al-Bukhari* had been published first in 1977 from Chicago (USA). The Preface to the latest edition of this work, however, announces the suppression of "the old edition" (p. vi), without spelling out any reason. Apart from the translators' statement, in the Preface, that some substantial additions and deletions distinguish the new edition, more clues to the nature and range of a thorough revision, transforming it into an almost new work, are contained in its full title: Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Quran in English Language: *A Summarised Version of At-Tabari, al-Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir with Comments from Sahib al-Bukhari.*

As compared to the 1977 version, the new one draws also on al-Qurtubi's *tafsir*, making it all the more wide-ranging, comprehensive and authentic. Moreover, in its present arrangement of placing each verse of the Quran parallel to its English interpretation, it is a marked improvement on the old edition from readers' point of view.

As to the rationale of this work, Taqui al-Din al-Hilali, an illustrious Islamic scholar of our times, formerly Professor of Islamic Faith and Teaching at the Islamic University, al-Madina al-Munawwarah, Saudi Arabia realized its pressing need. The following account, in al-Hilali's words, touches upon both the

inadequacies of the English translations in circulation and the genesis and outstanding features of the translation under review:

> During the revision [of Muhammad Muhsin Khan's English translation of *Sahih al-Bukhari*] we came across the translation of the meanings of some of the verses of the Quran, some of them were translated wrongly, some were in need of clarification... we both [al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan] decided to translate the meaning of the Quran distinguished from other numerous English translations by the following:

1. The translation of the meaning of the verses of the Quran related with the Qualities of Allah in accordance with the Faith of the Prophet's Companions and those who followed them without giving similarities or examples or distorting or refuting completely or transferring the meanings.
2. Correction of serious mistakes which the previous translators had committed.
3. Clarification of the obscure sentences which the previous translators have not done, so as to leave the English readers in perplexity. (p. xxiii)

From the above quotation one gets a fairly clear idea of the aims and objectives of al-Hilali's and Khan's venture. Let us examine how far they succeed in accomplishing this task and in what respects their work is distinct from those of others.

What strikes one most about the present translation is that, unlike others, including the one by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, it offers a very clear, easy-to-grasp, explanatory paraphrase of the contents of the Quran, which is of great value and help for an average reader. And the additional information, inserted as parenthetical statements into the body of the English translation, is, almost as a matter of rule, taken from authentic Hadith. It goes without saying that a too literal translation is not desirable, for it defeats the very purpose of facilitating one's access to the original. Though a translator enjoys some liberty to fill gaps and supply essential information in line with the context, which may enable readers to appreciate better the

contents, this allowance is, however, hedged in by certain stringent precautions.

First, the additional information should be inserted in a way as to let readers differentiate between the actual Word of God and the translator's explanatory note, however important or useful the latter may be. For, if an unscrupulous translator interpolates his personal views into body of the translation, non-Arabic-speaking readers may mistake it for the Word of God itself. Moreover, such notes should be kept to the minimum so as not to disrupt the reading flow. Al-Hilali and Khan have taken utmost care on both the counts. On the one hand, their supplementary information facilitates a better understanding of the Quran, and, on the other, it familiarizes readers with Hadith, the next most important source of Islam. Above all, it shuts the door on interpolating unauthentic or patently sectarian or whimsical personal opinions and passing it off as part of the Quran itself, an outrageous act, which has been regretfully committed by some unscrupulous English translators of the Quran. For example, one finds only a garbled and fallacious account of miracles and things pertaining to *al-Ghayb* in Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Quran: English Translation*, (Lahore, 1917), Muhammad Asad's *The Message of the Quran* (Gibraltar, 1980), and Ahmed Ali's *al-Quran: A Contemporary Translation* (Karachi, 1984) or a strong sectarian bias, as in the following translations: S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali's *The Holy Quran with English Translation and Commentary according to the Version of the Holy Ahlul Bait* (Karachi, 1964), reprinted in its revised, expanded edition in 1988 from New York (USA) and in 1990 from Karachi (Pakistan); M. H. Shakir's *Holy Quran* (New York, 1982) Sayid Muhammad Hussain at-Tabatabai's incomplete work al-*Mizan: An Exegesis of the Quran*, (Tehran, 1983) and Shah Faridul Haq's English rendering of Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi's Urdu *tafsir, Holy Quran* (Karachi, 1988.).

Thanks to the painstaking efforts of a Revision Committee, some offensive material has been recently deleted from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's highly popular English translation, *The Meaning of the Holy*

Quran (Lahore, 1934). Its revised edition (Brentwood, USA, 1992) now stands largely free from deviations from the viewpoint of the Muslim orthodoxy. Even in its sanitized from, Yusuf Ali's work is no match to the authentic elucidation of the meaning and message of the Quran as found in al-Hilali's and Khan's work. To illustrate the point, reference may be made to the following examples:

a) In Surah al-Namal (27:82) mention is made of *Dabbat al-Ard* (a beast from the earth) as a sign of the Last Day. al-Hilali and Khan explain it by citing relevant Hadiths recorded in *Sahih Muslim* and *Sahih al-Bukhari*. As opposed to it, in his explanatory note Yusuf Ali defines the beast in terms of "gross Materialism" and in a quasi-philosophical fashion states:

> It will be the embodiment of fat worldly triumphs, which will appeal to a misguided and degenerate world, because such a corrupt world will have no assured belief in the Signs of Allah or in spiritual Light.

Then going a step further, which might further confound readers, Yusuf Ali even proposes a variant reading of the Quranic text in order to discover some far-fetched similarity between the Quran and the Bible:

> I do not know whether this Beast has any reference to the symbolism in chapter xxii of the Book of Revelation, which closes the New Testament. If *Takllimuhum* is read instead *Tukullimuhum*, it would mean that the Beast would wound them, symbolically, that Materialism would produce its own Nemesis.[1]

It is inexplicable what drove Yusuf Ali to resort to philosophy and comparative religion in order to explain the Quranic allusion, rather than to quote a relevant Hadith that makes the point crystal clear, as al-Hilali and Khan have rightly done.

b) al-Hilali and Khan are to be credited for explaining clearly and fully several recurrent key Quranic terms such as *al-Hasana* and *al-Saiyya* (al-Naml 27: 89 and 90), *al-Taghut* (Al-Baqarah

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[1] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Quran*. Revised Edition, Brentwood, USA, Amana Corporation., 1992, p. 956.

2:256), *Ayat* (al-Naml 27: 81), *al-Muhsinun* (al-Zumar 39: 34), (*al-Mujrimun* al-Furqan 25: 32) *al-Muttaqun* (al-Furqan 25: 15), *al-Sadiqun* (9:119) *al-Mushrikun* (al-Tawbah 9:113), *al-Maruf* and *al-Munkar* (al-Tawbah 9:112), *al-Fasigun* (al-Tawbah 9: 84), *al-Batil* (al-Araf 7: 173), *al Tayyibat* (al-Araf 7: 173) and *al-Hikmah*, (Ali 'Imran 3: 166).

Other English translations provide bare, literal meaning of these terms, failing to bring out in full the underlying Quranic concepts. Needless to say, al-Hilali's and Khan's elaboration on the authority of authentic Hadith in the present work greatly enhances one's understanding of the Quran.

c) Far from offering a too literal translation, which leads readers nowhere, al-Hilali and Khan often insert explanatory, parenthetical statements into the English translation of the text, enabling readers to appreciate better the point under discussion. Also, it ensures a fluent and flowing reading. In comparison, other translators either leave the gaps unattended or refer readers to their commentary, which often leaves much to be desired. In any case, it does not advance one's understanding. Here are two examples by way of comparison with Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation:

1) ... and indeed they are in great doubt concerning it [Quran]. (al-Hilali and Khan's translation of the last part of verse 110 of Surah.)[1]

Yusuf Ali translates the same as follows: "But they are in suspicious doubt concerning it."[2] While "it" is left unexplained in the body of Yusuf Ali's translation, the reader is directed to the following explanatory note which is supposed to clarify what "it" stands for:

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1 al-Hilali and Muhsin Khan, *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Quran in the English Language*, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Maktaba Darussalam, 1994, 350.

2 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, op. cit., 540.

> There is always in human affairs, the conflict between the old and the new the worn-out system of our ancestors and the fresh living spring of Allah's inspiration fitting in with new times and new surroundings. The advocates of the former look upon this latter not only with intellectual doubt but with moral suspicions, as did the People of the Book upon Islam, with its fresh outlook and vigorous, realistic way of looking at things.[1]

Even after reading the above note, the poor reader stands in need of another explanatory note for clarifying what is meant by the "living spring of Allah's inspiration," "intellectual doubt" and "moral suspicion."

2) ... but most mankind refuse [the truth] and accept nothing but disbelief. (al-Hilali's and Khan's translation of verse 89 of Surah al-Isra.)[2] Here is Abdullah Yusuf Ali's version: "Yet the greater part of men refuse [to receive it] except with ingratitude."[3]

It is hard to explain Yusuf Ali's preference for the expression "ingratitude," rather than the more accurate and apt "disbelief," as employed by al-Hilali and Khan.

It is very comforting and reassuring to observe that al-Hilali and Khan, being firmly grounded in Islamic traditions, interpret miracles and things related to *al-Ghayb* in a perfectly sound fashion by drawing on Hadith and other authentic material. Unlike some previous English translators such as Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Asad and Ahmed Ali and, to some extent, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, al-Hilali and Khan do not resort to apologia or pseudo-rationalism, which fails to do justice to the Quran. In its account of *al-Miraj* (accession) of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to the heavens with (his body and soul), (pp. 822-823), the incident of *al-Fil* (the army of elephants led by Abraha for invading Makkah and its destruction), (pp. 968-969), *al-Kawthar* (a river in Paradise), (p.

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1 Ibid., 540.

2 al-Hilai and Muhsin Khan, 442.

3 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 699.

970), and Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him) speaking in the cradle (pp. 85-86), the present work states the traditional Islamic position.

In its pursuance of the admirable objective of expounding as clearly as possible a view of things Quranic the present translation is supplemented with a fairly exhaustive Glossary spread over some 30 pages which explicates hundreds of terms, concepts and expressions. It is not doubt, a painstaking job on the part of translators to have compiled it for the benefit of readers yet it suffers from some weaknesses. First, a great restraint should have been exercised in the number of entries included in the Glossary; only the entries directly related to the Quran should have been better selected whereas those pertaining to the Arabic idiom could be dropped. Moreover, the entries on historical allusions in the Quran contain little information, for example, the entry on *"Sabiun"* (p. 999) is too vague. In all fairness, however, the entries pertaining to specific Quranic terms and *Ahkam* (commands) are packed with information and guidance such as those on *Riba* (usury) (p. 998), *Nisab* (p. 995), *Ibram* (p. 986), *Iqamat as-Salat* (p. 987), *Taghut* (p. 1001), *Tauhid* (p. 1002-1003), *Tayammum* (p. 1004) and *Zakat* (p. 1005).

An extensive Index running into about 35 pages, is another scholarly tool, which will be used with great benefit by the specialist and the lay alike. What is most gratifying about the Index is that it is much more exhaustive and accurate than the one appended to Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation. By way of just one instance in point, let us compare the first entry in both the works on the Prophet Aaron (Harun). Whereas al-Hilali and Khan identify 17 references to Aaron by citing Surah and verse numbers (p. 1065), Yusuf Ali mentions only three references to him, (p. 1723) Several appendices adorn al-Hilali's and Khan's work, which deal satisfactorily with such seminal articles of Islamic faith and concepts as the institution of prophethood (pp. 1008-1009), *Tauhid* (pp. 1009-1011) *Shahadah* (pp. 1011-1017), *polytheism, disbelief and their manifestations* (pp. 1017-1023), *Hypocrisy* (p. 1024), *The*

People of the Book (p. 1026), *Jesus and Muhammad* (Peace and blessing be upon them) in *the Quran and the Bible* (pp. 1027-1042) and *Jihad* (pp. 1043-1059). Of these, the last two deserve special mention for an insightful, sound and extensive treatment of all the relevant issues.

As to the authenticity of the work and impeccable credentials of the translators, several certificates by leading authorities, included in the work suffice, as those by Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz, Darul Ifta and Shaikh Umar Fullata, General Secretary, Islamic University, al-Madina al-Munawwara.

Although the work is a faithful rendering of the meaning of the Quran, it is after all, a product of the human mind, hence some minor mistakes have unwittingly crept into it, which are pointed out in the hope that the publisher would rectify them in the next edition:

1) The translators' insistence on assigning a narrow, of a specific sense to the twin Quranic phrase, *Mudkhala Sidqin* and *Mukhraja Sidqin* (al-Isra 17: 80) is somewhat intriguing. Such a localized interpretation is not found in other translations. Since al-Hilali and Khan have not quoted any Hadith to corroborate their assertion, it will be in the fitness of things, if the above mentioned verses are interpreted in a wider sense.

2) al-Hilali's and Khan's translation of the middle part of verses 85 of Surah al-Isra "Knowledge is with my Lord" is a bit inaccurate in that the Quranic expression, *amr* usually translated as command by other English translators, for example, by Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, is, for no obvious reason, rendered as "knowledge." It is inexplicable on more than one count. For in the last part of the same verse, the Quran pointedly mentions; *al-ilm* which has been accurately translated as "knowledge" by al-Hilali and Khan.

3) In the translation of verse 2 of Surah *al-Zumar* the additional explanatory material should have been better placed within parentheses. This practice is faithfully observed by them at all

other places. In this instance, they are not, however, guilty, in the least, of being unfaithful to the Quranic text. What is, however, suggested is that the translation of the text and the supplementary material elucidating it should be distinct from each other by enclosing the latter with parenthesis.

4) Ziad bin Amr bin Nufail, Salman al-Farsi and Abu Dhar al-Ghifari, the Prophet's Companions (May Allah be pleased with them) are mentioned, in particular, with reference to verse 18 of Surah al-Zumar. Since no Hadith or report is cited to support this interpretation, the readers are left uninformed a to why this Quranic verse is applicable to only these three particular Companions of the Prophet (May Allah be pleased with them).

5) There are some occasional slips related to incorrect English usage, for example, the omission of the definite article *the* before the Quran and the Bible (p. v).

Notwithstanding these minor, inadvertent lapses, the appearance of this translation is a major event in the Quranic scholarship and the translators deserve every credit for providing non-Arabic speaking readers easy and reliable access to the original. A creative work, however, loses much in translation. In so far as the Quran is concerned, being the Word of God, and inimitable in every respect, its translation, no matter however diligently and faithfully done, cannot capture, even in the slightest, the numerous and varied marvels of the original. It is really gratifying to note that the present translators are fully cognizant of severe limitations, inadequacies and constraints of the translation activity. And they rightly ask non-Arabic speaking readers to learn, at the earliest opportunity, Arabic for studying the Quran in original. Al-Hilali reinforces his point by recounting a personal, soul-stirring incident, which is worth-reproducing:

> The [non-Arabic speaking readers) must take the Quran and the Messenger's language (i.e. Arabic) as the only language to understand Islam. May Allah's mercy be on Shaikh Umar Uzbek, a great Turkish man, who strove for Islam in Uzbek Islam under the Russian government... He had vowed to Allah that he will

> never speak to a relative or anybody else except in the Quranic and the Messenger's language (Arabic). His wife sent a man for me to intercede that he should speak with her and his children in Turkish language,... When I spoke to him about it, he said: "Russians and compelled us to learn Russian language, so we learnt it. And unless they knew that the learning of the Russian language will make the person who learns it, follow their ways of thinking, characters, and their traditions, they would not have forced anybody to learn it. I have vowed to speak only in Arabic, and if my wife and children desire to enjoy speaking with me, they should learn the language of the Quran and of the Prophet (peace be blessings be upon him) and I am ready to teach them the Quranic language." (pp. xxiv-xxv)

In sum, all Hilali and Khan's work is an epitome of painstaking scholarship, editorial assiduity and attention to detail, and is destined to be used as a standard English translation of the Holy Quran for a long time to come. Finally, a word of praise for the publisher, Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) for its high standards of the production of this work.

Publication details of the first edition:

Chicago, USA, Kazi Publications, 1977. 604 pages.

Number of Editions: 25

14
Mufassir, Muhammad Ahmad
The Koran: The First Tafsir in English
(1979)

No biographical information is available about Mohammad Ahmad Mufassir who pretentiously claims to have produced the first *tafsir* in English. Apart from making this tall, unsubstantiated claim, he confers upon himself the appellation of mufassir, i.e. an exegete or writer of *tafsir*.

The subtitle of his work, "the first *tafsir* in English" is grossly misleading. His work is essentially a mediocre English translation with few notes. Worse, he has interpolated his notes into the body of the translated text. For unsuspecting readers it is impossible in such a case to distinguish between the Word of God and its interpretation as held by a mortal human being. It is one of the basic norms of Quran translation that the authorial comments must appear as distinct from the translation of the text.

His notes being unsound and full of errors are not helpful. For example, Verse 3 of Surah Al-Baqarah is rendered thus along with his interpolation: "And who believe in the future and in consequences of one's deeds." The verse, however, specifically states the belief in *al-Ghayb* (what lies beyond the ken of the human sense perception). Another instance in point is his mistranslation of Verse 5 of Surah al-Maida. He is guilty, in an equal degree, of having misinterpreted several Quranic terms and concepts. At times, these appear in his work beyond recognition. Perhaps the only redeeming feature of his work is his avoidance of the archaic, biblical language in his translation, which feature in most of the English translations of his day, carried out by even Muslim scholars, as for example, by Pickthall, Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Abdul Majid Daryabadi.

Since the author himself published his work, it had very limited circulation and was issued only once. Its copies are not usually found in libraries, with the only exception of the British Library, London which holds its copy. Since this work has been of little value, it has been consigned into oblivion. His knowledge and understanding of Islam and the Quran seems dubious. Notwithstanding the lack of any credentials he projects his work as original and ground-breaking. His misrepresentation of things Islamic is regrettable. It is hard to think of a plausible reason that prompted him to undertake such an ambitious project, of which he possessed little knowledge and expertise.

Publication details of the first edition:

London, Emere, 1979. 666 pages.

Number of Editions: 1

Other Reviews:

- "Review on the English Translation of the Quran by Muhammad Ahmad Mufassir," *Federation Samachar* (September 1980), 13-14.

15
Asad, Muhammad
The Message of the Quran
(1980)

Muhammad Asad's (1900-1992) translation is an important, though controversial work. His credentials both as a convert from Judaism to Islam and his public career, including some of his influential writings on Islam, as for example, *Islam at the Crossroads*, had raised expectations about his translation of the Quran. Born as Leopold Weiss in Galicia, Poland, and the grandson of an Orthodox rabbi, Asad took up journalism as his career, which took him to the Arab world and North Africa. He was struck by Islamic practices there and he readily recognized Islam as the simple, natural way of life and as true faith. He embraced Islam in 1926 and attended al-Azhar. His illustrious diplomatic career took him to Pakistan.

In 1964 he published part of his larger work, *The Message of the Quran*, containing his translation of and commentary on the first nine Quranic Surahs. It was brought out by the Muslim World League, Makkah. The complete version, however, was brought out in 1980, by another, obscure publisher in Spain.

In terms of his scholarship embracing both classical and modern thought patterns; his presentation skills by way of prefacing each Surah with its background information and offering extensive explanatory notes and his mastery over English idiom, his work, in a sense, stood out above the existing Quran translations, including those by Muslims. However, soon after the publication of his 1964 edition Muslim scholars realized, to their dismay that his interpretation of the Quran "often differs from the accepted interpretations."[1] As a result of his deviations, Muslim World League stopped its sponsorship of his project.

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[1] Arfaque Malik, "Review on the *Message of the Quran* by Muhammad Asad," *Muslim World Book Review* 1:1 (Autumn 1980), p. 6

A host of Muslim scholars have expressed their disapproval of Asad's departure from the mainstream understanding of Quran in both his translation and explanatory notes. For the latter he had drawn, in particular upon the *Tafsir al-Manar* initiated by the Egyptian modernist writer, Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) and completed by his disciple, Rashid Rida (d. 1935). He also appears to have been deeply influenced, rather overawed by the pseudo-rationalistic Mutazalite thought. Little wonder then that his work abounds in the denial of miracles and the explanation of several Quranic assertions in figurative terms of reference.

S. Habibul Haq Nadvi, Professor of Islamic Studies, University of Durban, South Africa, rightly draws attention to some regrettable features in Asad's work:

> Muhammad Asad, in the introduction to his translation, suggested three directives to translators of the Quran, to avoid erratic judgements in choice of interpretation. He advises the translator to follow the meaning of each Arabic word as it was used and understood in the time of the Prophet Unfortunately Asad himself has not followed these criteria in that he has departed from common translations of many words. His translation of words such as *al-Aya* as message, of jinn merely as 'invisible,' of *tabut* as *qalb* (heart) etc are innovations. The denial of miracles of the Quran by Asad has led him to deviate from orthodox beliefs of the *ahl al-sunna wa al-jama'a*. Consequently he has translated many Arabic words against the accepted linguistic usage of the Arabs. The descent of angels on the day of Badr, according to Asad, is metaphorical or allegorical, not actual.[1]

Neal Robinson points to Asad's Mu'tazilite leanings which have cast their shadow on both his translation and interpretation:

> Asad replaces the divine throne titles with abstract expression such as "in awesome almightiness enthroned" (Q.27:26 etc) and invariably translates *istawa 'ala' l'arsh* as 'established on the

[1] S. Habibul Haq Nadvi, "Review on *Towards Understanding the Quran*," *Muslim World Book Review* 10: 1 (1989), p. 6.

> throne of His almightiness.' At Q. 39: 75 he has a note explaining that the throne of almightiness is a metaphor for absolute dominion over all that exists, and at Q. 69:17 he has another stressing that the expression must be metaphorical because God is infinite in space and time. He translates Q.11:7 as 'the throne of His almightiness has rested on water,' but states in a footnote that this is a symbolic reference which seems to point to the God-willed evolution of all life out of water. In Q. 2: 225 he translates *kursi* as (eternal power...)[1].

Arfaque Malik, an authority on English translations of the Quran, identifies several similar discrepancies in Asad's explanatory notes. In all these instances Asad's unconventional, apologetic interpretation is not borne out by the Quranic text. His stance simply runs counter to the majority viewpoint of the Quran scholars down the ages:

a. We are told in the footnotes [on the first three verses of Surah al-Sharah] that the "burden" apparently refers to the Holy Prophet's mistakes... (p. 960). The author does not mention the type of mistakes commited. In any event this interpretation is against the exalted status of the Holy Prophet, who has been designated as "excellent exemplar" (Verse 21 of Surah al-Ahzab)

b. While explaining Verse 69 of Surah al-Anbiya, Muhammad Asad says: "Nowhere does the Quran state that Abraham was actually bodily thrown into the fire." (p. 495)

c. The author dismisses the "Theory of Abrogation" as a fanciful assertion, "which calls to mind the image of a human author correcting, on second thought, the proofs of his manuscript,." (pp. 22-23)

d. Luqman, referred to in Verse 31:12 is, we are told, a "mythical figure.... It [the Quran] uses the equally mythical figure Al-Khidr in Surah 18." (p. 628)

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[1] Neal Robinson, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Quran," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8:3 (1997), 267-268.

e. The allegory of Dhu'l Qarnayn, in verse 18:83, is meant to illustrate the qualities of a powerful and just ruler... (p. 452).

f. Asad asserts even in the face of an explicit Quranic statement, that Prophet Jesus did not speak in the cradle. With regard to verse 3:45 we are told that this is a "metaphorical allusion to the prophetic wisdom which was to inspire Jesus from a very early age." (p.73)

g. "Nowhere is the Quran is there any warrant for the popular belief that God has taken up Jesus bodily in his life time, into heaven. The expression "God exalted him unto Himself.".. denotes the elevation of Jesus to the realm of God's special grace."[1] (p. 135)

Rashid Ahmad Jullandri takes exception to Asad's garbled representation of the Quranic statements about the miracles granted to Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him):

> Regarding the healing of the sick by Jesus and his other miracles, these are confirmed by the Quran... Asad, on the other hand, takes the verse as a parable... Asad says: "In pre-Islamic usage, as well as in the Quran, the word *Tair* or *Tayr* often denotes fortune or destiny, whether good or evil Jesus intimated to the children of Israel that out of the humble clay of their lives he would fashion for them the vision of a soaring destiny"[2]

It emerges that as part of his academic training in the West, Asad considered critically, rather suspiciously the rich classical *tafsir* corpus. Under the spell of pseudo-rationalism and Mu'tazalite thought he tends to reject miracles and explain away the matters related to *al-ghayb* as something merely allegorical or symbolic. He divests the Quranic account of miracles perhaps in order to make it as acceptable to the Western readers. Of a similar vein is his distrust of the joys of Paradise and his scant regard for Hadith corpus.

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1 Arfaque Malik, op. cit., pp. 6-7

2 Rashid Ahmad Jullandri, "Review on Asad's *The Message of the Quran," Islamic Quarterly* 12: 3 (July-September 1968), p. 179

Owing to the liberties taken by Asad in interpreting the Quran, his work did not gain currency among Muslims. Notwithstanding its some excellent features use of elegant English, presentation skills, providing an overview of the contents of each Surah before the reader grapples with the text and inclusion of some helpful appendices, so far only five editions of his work have appeared. Generally speaking, his work has received lukewarm response from Muslims, the specialist and the lay alike.

Publication details of the first edition:

Gibraltar, Spain, Dar al-Andalus, 1980. 998 pages.

Number of Editions: 5

Other Reviews:

- Jullandri, Rashid Ahmad "Review on Asad's *The Message of the Quran," Islamic Quarterly*, 12: 3 (July-September 1968), 179-180.
- Eaton, G. "Review on *The Message of the Quran," Spectator* (June 1980), 18.
- Malik, Arfaque "Review on *The Message of the Quran* by Muhammad Asad," *Muslim World Book Review* 1:1 (Autumn 1980), 5-7.
- Wansborough, J. "Review on *The Message of the Quran," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43: 3 (1980), 594.
- Cragg. Kenneth "Review on *The Message of the Quran," Middle East Journal* 35-1 (1981), 88-89.
- Nadvi, A.A. "Review on *The Message of the Quran," Arabia* (Feb 1981), 80-81.
- Haywood, J. "Review on *The Message of the Quran," Journal of Semitic Studies* 28 (1983), 375-376.
- Kassis, H.A. "Review on *The Message of the Quran," International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 17 (1985), 570-572.

16
Zayid, Mahmud Yusuf
The Quran: An English Translation of the Meaning of the Quran
(1980)

In 1970s the Supreme Sunni and Shi'i Council of Lebanon entrusted a committee with the task of translating the Quran with such terms of reference which are acceptable to both the communities. Mahmud Yusuf Zayid, faculty member of the American University, Beirut headed the committee and was assisted by Umar Farukh, Islamic Maghani School, Lebanon; Majid Fakhry, American University, Beirut and al-Haj Ali Aqil, Supreme Shia Council of Lebanon.

Although this high profile committee comprising Muslim scholars and ulema undertook, this venture, according to Arfaque Malik, "it is not an altogether new but a revised translation based on N.J. Dawood's version. Mahmud Y. Zayid in his revision has discarded Dawood's arrangement (of the Quranic Surah in the chronological order) and has placed the suras in their proper order. Though Zayid has made several changes in the structure of English and in some places he has succeeded in improving the translation, the major part of the translation remains essentially the same."[1] It is worth clarifying that N.J. Dawood is an Iraqi Jew and his translation bristles with mistakes of omissions and interpolations. Whatever little revision of Dawood's flawed work is carried out by this Committee headed by Zayid is dismissed by Malik: "The revision in no way clears the ambiguity in Dawood's translation."[2]

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1 Malik, Arfaque "*The Quran, English Translation of the meaning of the Quran* checked and revised by M. Y. Zayid," *Muslim World Book Review* 1:4 (Spring 1981), 45.

2 Ibid.,

It is indeed a pity that this supposedly collaborative effort of a team of scholars relied so heavily on an earlier, and that too, a tendentious and flawed work. One expected, at least, a new translation from the team. Furthermore, it does not address the tricky issue of sectarianism. Although both Sunni and Shi'i scholars were associated with the project, they could not produce a work which would have bridged the gaps and contributed to a better understanding between the two major Muslim sects. Zayid's work disappoints the readers on both the counts. At most, it is a poor, pitiable replica of an earlier faulty work.

Zayid's contribution, though on another plane, is that he inspired and helped his team member, Majid Fakhry to embark upon a new translation of the Quran into English, later published in 1997. The latter has placed on record his indebtedness to the former and as a token of the same, he has dedicated his work to Zayid. 100

Publication details of the first edition:

Beirut, Lebanon, Dar al-Choura, 1980. 495 pages.

Number of Editions: 1

Other Reviews:

- Malik, Arfaque "*The Quran, English Translation of the meaning of the Quran* checked and revised by M. Y. Zayid," *Muslim World Book Review* 1:4 (Spring 1981), 45.

17
Sarwar, Shaykh Muhammad
The Holy Quran
(1982)

No information is available about the translator, Shaikh Muhammad Sarwar, his academic credentials and his ideological commitment either in his work or any other source.

The work does not have even Preface, which could shed some light on the objectives behind his venture. Nor does it have any explanatory note, which could provide some clues to his mindset and his approach to understanding the Quran. The language used in the translation is not smooth and fluent either. It points to the lack of his linguistic training. This plain translation is grossly reader-unfriendly. In the absence of any helpful notes or background material it cannot and does not advance the understanding of readers.

Its only one edition was brought out in 1982 by Islamic Seminary, Elmhurst, USA, the publisher, that later came to be known as Tahrike Tarsile Quran, specializing in publishing Shi'i translations, particularly of M.H. Shakir.

It is pity that Sarwar's work does not have any feature to comment upon. On the whole, it is a mediocre work, that renders the Quran into inelegant English, though without committing mistakes of omissions and mistranslation.

Publication details of the first edition:

Elmhurst, NY, USA, Islamic Seminary, 1982. 418 pages.

Number of Editions: 1

18
Ali, Ahmed
Al-Quran: A Contemporary Translation
(1984)

The Muslim community's stand on the desirability of the translation of the Quran has remained ambivalent. Notwithstanding the grave apprehensions and reservations about such a venture expressed by some classical authorities, the translations of the Quran in all major Languages of the world stand as an ineluctable part of Muslim scholarship. Broadly speaking, the need for translation arose mainly out of the desire to combat the erroneous and confounding Orientalist versions of the Quran and to serve those Muslims whose access to the meaning of the Quran could not be through Arabic. In all fairness, some translations have, in some measure, achieved the twin objectives. Nonetheless, the serious risks inherent in the venture, as voiced by some classical authorities, cannot be taken lightly. For a faulty translation of the Quran, marred by the translator's sectarian predilections or pseudo-intellectual idiosyncrasies, results in desecrating the Word of God and in misleading unsuspecting readers, otherwise unable to follow the Quran in Arabic. Hence the necessity of a translator's adherence to the norms of Quranic exegesis.

That these norms should be scrupulously observed is reinforced by reading Ahmed Ali's brazenly apologetic and erroneous foray into the field. It is an alarming fact that this translation, though littered with unorthodox, in places, even absurd and fantastic interpretations of the Quran, has been reprinted as many as 12 times since its first appearance in 1984.

Ahmed Ali (1908-1994) rose to fame as a literary figure in the Indian subcontinent, with novels written in both English and Urdu to his credit. *Angarey*, a collection of stories edited by him caused a furore in the religious and literary circles for its irreverence

towards Islamic sanctities. Ten years before his death, however, he turned his attention to the Quran and produced his English translation. Originally published in 1984 by a little known publishing house in Karachi, Pakistan, his work was soon sponsored and re-issued by two leading publishers in the West - Princeton University Press, USA and Oxford University Press. The former has brought out its seven editions.

Aggravating further the errors of perspective common among such apologetic translators of the Quran as Syed Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Ali, Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad, Ahmed Ali's work is an extreme instance of this trend. He betrays pseudo-rationalism by his irksome insistence on denying the miracles referred to in the Quran. In order to do so, he bluntly distorts and misrepresents the import of the Quran. To add further insult to the injury, he has the temerity to quote, of course out of context, some classical linguists or exegetes, without bothering to pay heed to the established principles of the Quranic exegesis and the consensus of the Muslim scholars down the ages. Likewise, in explaining the Quranic verses related to women, Ahmed Ali is so swayed by his modernist views that he feels no compunction in mistranslating them.

Here are some of the most bizarre items of Ahmed Ali's odd version of the Quran:

i. For treating the women guilty of disloyalty and ill-conduct the Quran prescribes admonishing them, avoiding them in bed and as a last resort, beating them (al-Nisa 4:34). Ahmed Ali, however, offers a fantastic translation of the above verse thus: 'As for women you feel are averse talk to them suasively, then leave them in bed alone (without molesting them) and go to bed with them (when they are willing)' (p. 78)
ii. In al-An'am 6: 76-8 the Quran recounts the Prophet Abraham's reactions on observing the star, the moon the sun and their setting-a mental experience through which he gained the understanding of the Truth. For reasons best known to himself Ahmed Ali renders the following gratuitous translations: when

the night came with her covering of darkness, he saw a star,' and (*Azar, his father*) said: "this is my Lord." But when the star set (Abraham) said: "I love not those who wane." When (*Azar*) saw the moon rise all glow, he said: "This is my Lord," But even as the moon set (Abraham) said: "If my Lord had not shown me the way I would surely have gone astray." When (*Azar*) saw the sun rise resplendent, he said: "My Lord is surely this..." (p. 121, italics mine).

iii. As for the Prophet's Ascension (Bani Israil 17:1), Ahmed Ali enlightens his readers: 'At the time of the revelation of this Surah, there was no al-Aqsa or any other mosque behind the temple of Solomon… Historically the Prophet migrated by night to Madina some 300 miles away from Makka and al-Aqsa means distant, and mosque means a place where God is adored ... And it was at Madina where the Prophet's mission spread out to its widest horizons' (p. 249). Driven by their pseudo-rationalism some apologist translators have described the Prophet's ascension as a merely spiritual experience, but Ahmed Ali outclasses them all in denying it altogether and in mistaking it for hijrah.

iv. That Allah had subjected mountains and birds so that they hallow Him along with the Prophet David (peace and blessings be upon him) is an idea so discordant with Ahmed Ali's pseudo-rationalism that he is quick to instruct his readers: 'Although *al-jibal* and *at-tair* commonly mean mountains and birds respectively, here they mean chiefs of tribes and small kingdoms.' (p. 280)

v. In *al-Naml* 27:16-17 the Quran mentions the Prophet Solomon's knowledge of the language of birds and animals with special reference to the ant and hoopoe. Ahmed Ali's note has recourse to the most outlandish information in order to by-pass the natural meaning of the text. He writes: *Naml*, for instance, means ants, but it was also the name of a tribe in Syria ... Similarly *hud-hud* means hoopoe, but was also the name of a South Yemen tribe Knowledge of the language of tair implies that tair were a conquered tribe or race and David and Solomon

had knowledge of their language. Similarly *jinns* implies nomadic tribes many of whom were recruited by the king of Tyre for Solomon. The role of Hud-hud in this Surah is significant and could not have been performed by a bird. In fact it is known that the name of a prince of Midian in the days of King Solomon himself was also 'Hud-hud' (pp. 322-3).

vi. Another instance of Ahmed Ali's odd reading of the Quran occurs in the mistranslation of verses about the Prophet Job's recovery as a special favour from Allah: remember Our votary Job because he called to his Lord: "Satan has afflicted me with disease and distress." *"Go swiftly to the spring"* (We said)... "Take a handful of herbs," (We said to him), and apply and rub them and *do not make a mistake* (Sad 38: 41, 44-italics mine). To what absurd lengths can Ahmed Ali go in his consistent denial of miracles is adduced by his disclosure: 'this verse is concerned with the cure of disease of a dermic nature, caused, it appears, by snake bite. For *Shaitan* also means snake and "devil of the desert," hence "thirst" is indicated by the instruction to go swiftly to the spring ...' (p. 390)

vii. It is both amusing and pathetic to read Ahmed Ali's following preposterous explanation of *'shaqq al-Qamar'* (the cleaving asunder of the moon) referred to as a sign of the imminent Day of Judgement in the Quran (al-Qamar 54:1): "Shaqqa" includes "opposition" in its basic meanings... the moon was the emblem of the Quraish. After the advent of Islam there was a split among the Quraish, some accepting Islam, others remaining pagan and opposed to it. *Shaqq al-Qamar*, therefore, 'stands in the metaphor of the Quran for this split in the ranks of the Quraish' (p. 460). What is still more bewildering, and betrays the unscrupulous mind of the author, is that his queer explanation should then be used to get at the rulers of Saudi Arabia: "Throughout the ages the crescent has remained the quintessential symbol of Islam it was however replaced with the militant sword by the Wahabi House of Saudi in Arabia. The Saud also changed the name of the country to Saudi Arabia, thus changing the complexion of Islam." (p. 460)

Apart from the original, albeit nonsensically fanciful, contribution to Quranic exegesis, Ahmed Ali's work is in the main, a poor replica of Muhammad Asad's translation of the Quran. He is merely echoing Asad's views in, for example, the following instances:

a. Allegorical and metaphorical interpretation of several Quranic verses: Al-Baqarah 2:35, 73, 243 and 248 (pp. 16, 19, 42 and 43 respectively); Hud 11:7 (p. 188); al-Hijr 15:29 (p. 224); Ta Ha 20:22 (p. 267); al-Waqiah 56: 34 (p. 468); al-Tin 95: 1-5 (p. 542) and al-Fil 105:1-5 (p. 552). Cf. Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Quran* (Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980), pp. 9, 16, 54, 55, 312, 386, 472, 832, 961 and 976 respectively.

b. Denial of miracles granted to the Prophet 'Isa: Ali Imran 3: 49 (p. 56) and Maryam 19: 16-30 (p. 265), Cf. Asad, *op. cit.*, pp. 74 and 459 respectively.

c. Unorthodox views on abrogation in the Quran: Al-Baqarah 2: 106 (p. 24). Cf. Asad, op. cit., pp. 22-3. C.

d. Apologetic views about female witnesses, female captives of war, polygamy and *jinn*: Al-Baqarah 2: 282 (p. 50); al-Nisa 4:3 and 33 (pp. 73 and 78) and al-Anam 6:130 (p. 128). Cf. Asad, *op. cit.,* pp. 63, 101, 109 and 193 respectively.

There is hardly any redeeming feature of this translation. It abounds in instances of omission, mistranslation, use of archaic, obsolete expressions and inconsistency in translating Quranic terms. For example, *Salat* (Prayer) - a key Quranic term - has been variously rendered as 'devotional obligations' (p. 12), 'devotion' (p. 16), 'service' (p. 42) and 'moral obligation' (p. 123). Likewise *ahl al-Dhikr* (people of admonition) appears oddly as 'keepers of the oracles of God' (p. 275). Use of such archaic expressions as 'guerdon' (for reward) and 'nemesis' (for penalty or punishment) along with employing such an informal one as 'puffed up' (for being proud) reflects poorly on the translator's command of the different registers of his target language - English.

Even without it stylistic blemishes, Ahmed Ali's translation would deserve severe strictures for its aberrant approach to the word of God and for its many errors. It is an urgent need that Muslim translators of the Quran observe, at least in some measure, the norms of Quranic exegesis.

Publication details of the first edition:

Princeton, NJ, USA, Princeton University Press, 1984, 572 pages.

Number of Editions: 12

Other Reviews:

- Igonetti, G., "Review on *al-Quran: A Contemporary Translation by Ahmed Ali," Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 45 (1985), 521-522.
- Keck, K.E., "Review on Ahmed Ali's translation of the Quran," *Acta Orientalia* 47 (1986), 174-175.

19
Jamal-un-Nisa bint Rafai
The Quran: Translation of Study
(1984)

Jamal-un-Nisa bint Rafai, of the Indo-Pak descent who later settled down in UK, holds the distinction of being the first woman translator of the Quran. Throughout her life in the UK she remained engaged in teaching the Quran in local Muslim community study centres. Her focus was on imparting the Quranic Arabic. It is reflected in her English rendering of the Quran, as she translates each and every Quranic word in parallel columns, listing Quranic words and their English equivalents. She delves into the roots and grammatical forms of the Quranic vocabulary. Some instances in point are as follows:

> *mutaqin*→ *waqa*= to preserve, safeguard, protect: *atqa*= be cautious of *taqi*=Allah fearing.
>
> *yuminun*→ *aman*: to be faithful or loyal→ *amn*: security, safety. *Itmana*: to have faith in, *yuminun*= IIIrd person, masculine, plural. *Mudari*
>
> *Amn*: IIIrd person, masculine, singular, *Madi*

Her obsession with the jargon-laden Quranic vocabulary results in producing such translation which is awkward, unreadable and incomprehensible. Take this as illustrative.

> This (masculine) is The Book no doubt in it guidance for the, to the Allah fearing. Those (masculine) who believe (IIIrd person, masculine, plural, *Mudari'*) by; with; in; of; on; upon; through; for the hidden, unseen and who establish (IIIrd person, masculine, plural, *Mudari'*) the Prayer (5 times daily prayers) and from what; of what; whatever provided (them) with the means of living, I, We (Allah) from Us, to us, on us them they; spend (IIIrd person, masculine, plural, *Mudari*') and those (masculine) who believe (IIIrd person, masculine, plural, *Mudari*') in what, with what, because is sent down to you and what is sent down before you and by; with; in; of; on; upon;

through; for the life after death they; them firmly believe (III person, Masculine, plural, *Mudari')* (Al-Baqarah 2:2-4)

Readers are bound to be bogged down by the above version. A simple word, *ba* is defined with reference to as many as eight preposition, without any indication as to which one of these fits in with the context. Far from grasping the meaning of the Quran, readers are most likely to be totally confused by the description of the person, gender, number and tense of the Quranic words used in the verse. The twin objectives of teaching Quranic Arabic extensively and transmitting the contents of the Quran in clear, easy to understand English cannot be met in a single work; two separate, independent works are needed.

Moreover, she has invested all of her energy and time on grammatical, lexical aspects while neglecting the overall message of the Quran. Nowhere does she attempt to explicate any of the numerous Quranic allusions. Readers are left unguided about the Quranic content and context. It is nonetheless worth adding that she has prefaced a brief introduction to each Surah, touching upon its main themes. However, this is not sufficient enough to provide readers with the meaning of Quranic concepts, terms, events and personalities. Her work regrettably lacks annotation.

Appended to her work are two pieces: i) a list of the recurrent Quranic expressions and their English equivalents, and ii) a manual of Arabic grammar. Ahead of her time, in 1980s when the Feminist incursion had not so aggressively maligned the field of Quranic studies, she introduced this innovative feature: identifying all feminine expressions in the Quranic text in order to underscore the largely unacknowledged note of gender parity in the Quran.

As the first attempt by a woman translator, it is valuable, though its usefulness and appeal are limited owing to his disproportionate preoccupation with Arabic grammar.

Details of the first edition:

Ta Ha Publisher, London. 1984 onwards. A multivolume work. ISBN: 0907461867

20
Irving, T.B.
The Quran: The First American Version
(1985)

Thomas Ballantine Irving (1914-2002), a scholar and linguist, who embraced Islam, was born in 1914 at Princeton, Ontario, Canada, of Scottish parents. For years he taught Spanish at the University of California. Apart from the study of the Quran, history of Muslim Spain was his other area of special interest.

When his translation appeared first, with the subtitle, "the First American Version," it was widely criticized. For it readily brings to mind numerous "versions" of the Bible Authorized Version (1611), Revised Version (1881), Revised Standard Version (1946-1952) and New International Version (1979), to name a few, which differ from one another in both the contents and presentation.

T.B. Irving's new edition *The Noble Quran* is more of a reprint than a revision. In the absence of any note from either the author or the publisher, there is no definite information on this count. That it is a somewhat revised version is borne out quite clearly from a highly desirable change in title. The previous obnoxious title *The Quran: The First American Version* (Vermont, Amana Books 1985), has been changed to *The Noble Quran: Arabic Text and English Translation*. When Irving's translation first appeared in 1985, almost every reviewer and student of the Qur'an took strong exception to the choice of the expressions 'American' and 'Version.' While one may attribute the change in title to this criticism, it is difficult to say that it is a well-considered revision for the 1985 title retaining both expressions, 'American' and 'Version,' appears on the inner title page of this work. The author and publisher should have given some thought, at least, to this discrepancy.

The 1992 edition is an improvement on the earlier edition in some other respects, though. Most of the changes introduced in the new edition are welcome ones. It is gratifying to note the inclusion of the Arabic text, the absence of which was justifiably strongly criticized by S. Parvez Manzoor in his review of the 1985 edition. Another refreshing change is that the English translation now has consecutive numbering of verses. This facilitates easy reference and access to the work. As for the reshuffling of each Surah's introductory notes it is difficult to think of any plausible grounds for this. In the 1985 edition, these introductory sections appear at the beginning of each Surah, and this arrangement is of great benefit, for the background information about the contents and context of each Surah mentally prepares the reader to follow the translation in a better way. But now, all the introductory notes for each Surah have been lumped together at the beginning of the work, so that before embarking upon the study of a Surah, readers will have to refer back each time to the introductory part of the work. This rearrangement in the new edition has actually done more harm than good.

However, a very welcome change in this edition is the deletion of all side headings on each page of the English translation, though they are still retained in the table of contents. In his enthusiasm to help the reader ascertain the meaning and message of each group of verses, Irving assigned, rather established a theme for each group of verse in the 1985 edition. It was a pointless exercise on several counts. First, the division of verses for this purpose is a highly arbitrary and subjective venture. Moreover, since each Quranic verse is laden with many themes and layers of meaning, it is almost impossible to establish a single theme for each verse, not to speak of specifying a single theme for a group of several verses. Despite Irving's best intentions, this exercise sometimes verged on the absurd and far from helping readers it actually confused them. For example, it is very difficult to see that the verses in al-Araf 7: 167-9 deal with the theme of 'imperfect messages'; al-Tawbah 9:38-40 with 'draft-dodging'; al-Tawbah 9: 108 with 'always build firmly'; al-Kahf 18: 83-7 with 'double horns'; Saba' 34: 1 with 'a

doxology'; and al-Mujadalah 58: 13 with 'parliamentary procedure,' *ad infinitum*.

As already indicated in preparing the 1992 edition the author has regrettably not taken note of any of the criticism of his earlier edition made by Andrew Rippin, *The Muslim World* 77:2 (April 1987), pp. 141-2, Khalid Masud, *Muslim World Book Review* 9:3 (Spring 1989), pp. 59-60, and S. Parvez Manzoor also in *Muslim World Book Review* 7:4 (Summer 1987), pp. 72-5. Nonetheless, the author has corrected some of the mistakes which had crept into the earlier edition. For example, he has avoided splitting the first verse of Surah al-Fatihah into two verses and correctly rephrased the translation of Surah al-Falaq 113:2. The new edition contains correct renderings in both these instances. Yet these are perhaps the only corrections incorporated in this new edition as numerous other instances of mistransliteration and mistranslation persist. A new edition published after seven years should have addressed at least some of the valid objections. For example, in some instances verses having past or future tenses have been mistaken as commands and duly rendered in the imperative, as in Surah al-Fath 48: 27; al-Tahrim 66: 4; al-A'la 87: 6 and Irving's inability to distinguish between *'Iman'* and *'Amani'* in Al-Baqarah 2: 28 and 111; al-Nisa 4:123 and al-Hadid 57:14 still persists. Likewise, some of his awkward, inexplicable translations of the Quranic terms and concepts continue to mar the work. For example, *Zakat* is rendered as 'welfare task,' *Infaq* as 'spending in taxes' (Al-Baqarah 2: 215); *Qiblah* as 'the Direction' (Al-Baqarah 2:142-5), *'Umrah'* as 'an Experience' (Al-Baqarah 2: 196) and *ila* is narrowly construed as 'the failure to have intercourse' (Al-Baqarah 2: 226). Some other serious mistakes of translation in the earlier edition have not been rectified, as for example in Al-Baqarah 2: 37.

Irving goes too far in his zeal for the domestication of Quranic terms. For example, *Umrah*, the well known form of Pilgrimage is translated simply as "Experience," *al-Muzzammil* as "the (one) bundled up." This prompts S. Parvez Manzoor to comment:

> The most serious charge that may be made against the present translation [Irving's] is that it is 'Pauline' in divine worship' (p. xli) and hence envisions itself as more than a translation, 'a version' really. On both these counts, thus, it exceeds the proper limits accepted for works of this kind.

Even in its present, rather nominally revised form, Irving's work leaves much to be desired. It is time the author rectified some of the obvious errors in this otherwise highly useful English translation of the Qur'an.

References

1. S. Parvez Manzoor, "Review on Irving's Translation of the Quran," *Muslim World Book Review*, 7:4 (Summer 1987), 72-75.
2. Ibid, 73

Publication details of the first edition:

Battleboro, Vermount, USA, Amana, 1985, 401 pages, ISBN: 0-915597-08-X

Number of Editions: 15

Other Reviews:

- Siddiqui, M., "Review on Irving's Translation of the Quran," *Hamdard Islamicus*, 9:1 (1986), 197-99.
- Albadawi, A.M, "A New Translation of the Quran," *Crescent International* 15:4 (1-15 May 1986), 13.
- Dabashi, H., "Review on Irving's Translation of the Quran," *Middle East Journal* 41 (1987), 308-310.
- S. Parvez Manzoor, "Review on Irving's Translation of the Quran," *Muslim World Book Review*, 7:4 (Summer 1987), 72-75.

- Rippin, A., "Review on the Quran: The First American Version" *Muslim World*, 77:2 (April 1987), 141-142.
- Boullata, I.J., "Review on Irving's Translation of the Quran," *Religious Studies Review*, 14 (1988), 266-267.
- Masud, Khalid, "Review on Irving's Translation of the Quran" *Muslim World Book Review*, 9:3 (Spring, 1989), 59-60.
- Poonawala, I.K., "Review on Irving's Translation of the Quran" *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 110 (1990), 166-167.

21
Khatib, Mohammad M.
The Bounteous Koran: A Translation of Meaning and Commentary
(1986)

Far from being a mere expression of the translator's pious enthusiasm, the arrival of this latest English translation, rendered by an Arabic-speaking Egyptian scholar, ranks as a major event in Quranic scholarship. Mohammad M. Khatib (fl 1980s) not only knows the subject very well, but also avoids and rejects certain errors common among other translators of the Quran in English: it has therefore neither the irksome use of archaic biblical English as in the works of Pickthall, Abdul Yusuf Ali and Abdul Majid Daryabadi; nor the obtrusion of unconventional views as found in the notes of Muhammad Asad; nor the unpardonable faults that mar mistranslation, omission and transposition that mar the Orientalists' ventures in the field, particularly those of Sale, Palmer and Arberry.

The translator does a masterful job of rendering faithfully, to the extent possible, the meaning of the translation of the Quran into readable and fluent English. It thus stands out as a much-needed work for the English-speaking students of the Quran.

That Khatib's work is both authentic and authoritative is borne out: (a) by the sound contents of his brief yet insightful notes elucidating the circumstantial setting of Surahs and the meaning of certain Quranic allusions and expressions; (b) by his own acknowledgement of having drawn his material from such reliable classical authorities as 'Ibn Kathir al-Qurtubi, al-Zamakhshari, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, al-Baidawi, al-Jalalain, al-Nasafi, al-Bukhari, Ibn al-Jawzi, Ibn Sa'd and al-Wahidi (p. vii); and (c) by the al-Azhar Islamic Research Academy Revision Committee certificate on the trustworthiness of this translation.

Though this substantial work is to be warmly welcomed, it nonetheless suffers from some inaccuracies, although in such an ambitious undertaking some lapses are inevitable. But, however, unimportant some of these inaccuracies may seem, it is reasonable to expect that a work of this nature should be free from all blemishes.

First, the very spellings, 'Koran' and 'Mecca,' used throughout the work, are obnoxious. So is the blatant omission of any honorific formula while mentioning the proper name of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him). While referring to the difficulties encountered in the translation of the Quran, Khatib inadvertently makes an observation which is somewhat derogatory to the dignity of the Quran. He says: 'The most tangible difficulty that I faced ... was the *omissions* and *additions* and the figurative words that are part of the beauty... of the Books' (p.vi, italics mine). It leaves an odd impression. Perhaps what Khatib has in mind is ellipsis, a familiar grammatical and figurative device used frequently in the Quran, which he unwittingly brands as 'omissions.' Since it is an article of faith with the Muslims that the Quran is the perfect, flawless Word of Allah, one must exercise utmost caution in passing any such remark. Moreover, such a loose statement, coming as it does from a Muslim, might leave some credence to the Orientalists' baseless charges against the Quran.

Khatib rightly follows the traditional order of Surahs in his translation and adds that he avoided 'a chronological rearrangement favoured by some translators before me' (p. vii). As Khatib himself concedes that 'the arrangement of the verses and the Surahs in the manner we have them today were done by the Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime' (p. xiii), any rearrangement of Surahs, be it chronological or otherwise, is simply out of the question and earlier translators guilty of doing so cannot be exonerated.

A historically-based Introduction, discussing briefly the major events referred to in the Quran and of the Prophet's life, precedes the Quran translation. Khatib's far-ranging exploration of the

issues encompasses almost all the important aspects of Islam, the Quran and the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him). However, some of Khatib's statements are somewhat questionable. For example, he holds that the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) was born in 'a house which had belonged to Ishmael, son of Abraham' (p. xxiii) or that 'Abu Ayyub of the Khazraj clan' was the Prophet's uncle (p. xxxi) or that at Badr the Makkan army was 'ill-prepared for their determined and unified resistance' (p. xxxiii). Khatib betrays his approval of the modern commentators who 'understand that the Koran contains numerous allusions to modern scientific knowledge, beginning with the smallest details of creation of the universe and the human life, to other fields such as astronomy, botany, meteorology and so forth' (p. xiv). It is perhaps worth insisting that the Quranic exegesis in such terms of reference must be pursued with great restraint and caution. For the Quran is the unalterable, eternal Word of Allah whereas 'modern scientific knowledge,' or all knowledge, is an ever-changing, merely human pursuit.

Khatib is successful, in large measure, in faithfully representing the sense of the original in readable English. It will certainly help his translation gain general currency among English-speaking students of the Quran Nonetheless, the translation suffers from some inaccuracies which are pointed out in the hope that they may be rectified in future editions.

Following are the examples of omission where the translator has failed to render some Quranic expressions into English. The omitted part has been italicized:

(i) Al-Ma'idah 5;67 (p. 150) O Messenger, proclaim what has been sent down to you, *from your Lord*, for it not, you then have not conveyed His message.'

(ii) Al-Tawbah 9: 75 (p. 254) 'And *of them* there are some who have made a covenant with God.'

(iii) Maryam 19: 22 (p. 398) 'So she conceived him, then she withdrew *with him* to a remote place.'

(iv) Al-Furqan 25: 16 (p. 472) “This is incumbent on *your* God, a binding promise.’

(v) Al-Furqan 25: 29 (p. 473) ‘Satan was ever a disappointer *to man.*’

(vi) Al-Furqan 25: 49 (p. 476) ‘and that We may let many a beast and a man, *created by* Us, drink from it.’

Following are the instances of mistranslations:

(i) Maryam 19: 34 (p. 399) ‘the word of truth about which you are wavering’ (incorrect); ‘the word of truth about which they are wavering’ (correct).

(ii) Maryam 19: 26 (p. 398) ‘Indeed I have vowed to the Most Benignant taciturnity’ (incorrect); ‘Indeed I have vowed to the Most Benignant a vow’ (correct).

(iii) Al-Furqan 25: 62 (p. 477) ‘And He is Who has made the night and the day a succession, for whoever he desires to remember or to be thankful’ (incorrect); ‘And He is Who has made the night and the day a succession for him who desires to remember or to be thankful’ (correct).

An irksome feature of Khatib’s translation is his inconsistent translation of some recurrent Quranic verses or expressions. Following are the instances:

(i) The Quranic phrase *al-Fawz al-Azim* (al-Tawbah 9: 72, 89 and al-Nisa 4: 13) has been translated as ‘great felicity’ (p. 253), ‘great bliss’ (p. 256) and ‘great triumph’ (p. 100).

(ii) Another Quranic term, *al-Amr bi al-Maruf wa Nabi ‘An al-Munkar* (al A’raf 7: 157 and al-Tawbah 9: 71) has been variously translated as ‘enjoining good and forbidding evil deeds’ (p. 217) and ‘enjoining good turn and forbidding abomination’ (p. 253).

(iii) An almost identical Quranic *ayah* (al-Shu’ara 26: 123 and 141) has been rendered as ‘were mendacious to the messengers’ (p. 487) and ‘believed not in the messengers’ (p. 488).

(iv) A recurrent Quranic phrase (al-An'am 6: 15; al-A'raf 7: 59, Yunus 10: 15, al-Shu'ara' 26: 135, 156 and 189), has been translated in as many as six different ways as 'the torment of a great day' (p. 164), 'the retribution of a dreadful day' (p. 164), 'the retribution of a dreadful day' (p. 202 202), 'the torment of a great Day (Doomsday)' (p. 268), 'the torment of a dreadful day' (p. 488), 'the torment of grievous day' (p. 489) and 'a chastisement of a heinous day' (p. 491).

Unlike Khatib, Abdul Majid Daryabadi and Pickthall are consistent in translating identical Quranic expressions or *ayat*. The above-mentioned phrase has been translated by them, respectively, as 'the torment of a Mighty Day' and 'the retribution of an awful day' throughout their works.

Khatib's command of the English language is not yet complete; some outlandish and awkward expressions mar this otherwise highly commendable work. Yet despite these blemishes, Khatib's translation is to be welcomed in that it is bound to advance the understanding of the Quran, among the English-speaking public.

Publication details of the first edition:

London, Macmillan, 1986, 827 pages, ISBN: 0-333-34738-2

Number of Editions: 1

Other Reviews:

- Eaton, G., "Review on *The Bounteous Koran," Islamic Quarterly* 31(1987), 57-61.
- Mc Auliffe, J.D., "Review on *The Bounteous Koran* by M.M. Khatib," *Muslim World*, 78:2 (April 1988), 147-148.

22
Nahaboo, Houssein
The Holy Quran
(1987)

Houssein Nahaboo (1920-2000) from Mauritius studied Arabic at the Institute of Arabic language, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and was commissioned by Dar al-Ifta, Saudi Arabia to produce the translation of the Quran into French. Later, he translated the Quran into Creole, the local language of Mauritius. Then he embarked upon this English translation in order to serve the needs of the ordinary English readers of the Quran. As he consulted several English and French translations presently in circulation and became aware of their serious inadequacies, he resolved to produce his translation, especially for the benefit of his fellow Mauritians 'in an easily, readable language, with just enough notes to understand the text.'

Nahaboo delivers little of what he promises. An overview of the fundamental Quranic concepts and teachings, supplemented with bare Surah verse reference numbers, prefaces the main work. This, he believes, will familiarize uninitiated readers with the Quran. A concise introductory account of the basic teachings of Islam and the Quranic world-view, rather than a mere index reference, would, however, have made his work more useful for his intended readers. For they can hardly be expected to grasp the meaning and message of the Quran on their own, with the aid of only an index.

A more serious flaw in Nahaboo's translation is his heavy, though unacknowledged, reliance on the earlier and highly popular English translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali. As a result, Nahaboo's translation stands as more of a simplified version of Yusuf Ali than a new, independent translation. Since many passages bear a close resemblance between the former and the latter, it cannot be ascribed to sheer coincidence. For example, his translation of verses 1-6 of

al-An'am (pp. 222-3), verses 71-3 of Yusuf (p. 369) and verses 83-7 of al-Kahf (pp. 519-20) have much in common with Yusuf Ali's earlier rendering.[3]

The explanatory notes appended to the work are not only brief, but also too limited in their range and coverage. They do not take readers very far in gaining a better understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran. Nahaboo nevertheless deserves credit for his laudable effort in making average readers better acquainted with the Quran. He does not lay claim to originality or Islamic erudition. In the light of his brief notes he appears as a traditionalist Muslim, who offers a simple interpretation of the Quran, without delving deep into its numerous marvels. He rests content with presenting only a bare overview of some of the Quranic terms, concepts and themes.

Publication details of the first edition:

Pailles, Mauritius, Mushaf Publications, 1987, 1080 pages.

Number of Editions: 1

[3] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Amana Corporation, Brentwood, USA, 1989, pp. 294-5, 498-9 and 731-2 respectively

23
Barelvi, Ahmad Raza Khan
The Holy Quran: An English Translation from Kanzul Iman
(1988)

The Holy Quran translated by Shah Faridul Haque represents another addition to the growing body of such English translations, written originally in some other language, mostly in Urdu – the language commonly used by Muslims in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Other notable examples of these re-translated versions are the English translations of the works of Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, Abul Kalam Azad, Mufti Muhammad Shafi, Tabatabai, and Ghulam Ahmad Pervez.

More significantly, however, Haque's stands out as the latest addition to such English translations of the Quran, which are representative of a blatant sectarian bias. It belongs to a series of English translations reflecting the viewpoint of the Barelvi sect, of which an earlier specimen is Ali Ahmad Khan Jallendhari's, *Translation of the Glorious Holy Quran and Commentary* (Lahore, 1962) and H. Fatmi's *The Holy Quran* (Lahore, n.d.).

As indicated in the title, this is the English version of the original Urdu translation and commentary of the Quran entitled *Kanzul Iman* by Shah Ahmad Raza Khan (1856-1921) of Bareilly, northern India, which had first appeared in Urdu in 1910. As an Islamic scholar Ahmad Raza Khan unduly exaggerated the status of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), which alienated him from the mainstream Muslims, and culminated into the emergence of a sect known as Barelvis. Ahmad Raza Khan enjoys fame as the religious head of the highly popular sect known as the Barelvis. This sect stands apart from mainstream Muslims, especially in its interpretation of certain articles of faith. The Barelvis stand distinct for their excessive veneration of the Prophet

(peace and blessings be upon him), saint worship and grave worship.

One peculiar belief of this sect, their immoderate adulation of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), is to the fore in the work under review.

The translation, however, parades the above as a unique feature of this translation and as justification for this work. For him, Ahmad Raza Khan opted for such meanings of the Quranic verses which do not impair 'the status and dignity of Allah Almighty and His Prophets.' To illustrate this point he refers to a few Quranic verses and their comparative translation as offered by other leading Muslim translators, for example by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Asad, Pickthall, Abdul Majid Daryabadi and Ashraf Ali Thanvi. The verses cited in support of this claim are al-Inshirah (94:7); al-Fath (48: 2); Ali Imran (3: 142) and al-Rahman (55:33). In the translation of all these verses, Faridul Haque contends that other Muslim translators have miserably failed in maintaining the dignity of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and the exalted status of Allah. As it is, it is an outrageous charge which is absolutely baseless. The Barelvis appear to be hypersensitive on certain points, though their stance is not vindicated by the Quran and the Sunnah. Other instances of belief peculiar to Barelvis as featuring in this work as: (a) At places where Allah addresses Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) in the Quran in the second person singular as "you," Barelvi adds "O beloved." (b) he insists that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) possessed the knowledge of *al-Ghayb* (matters lying beyond the reach of man's perception) and overstretches the import of certain Quranic verses in order to vindicate his stance. (c) His translation of the first five verses of Surah al-'Alaq attempts at elevating the Prophet's role and status in faith beyond the permitted limits. (d) He goes to great lengths in twisting the meaning of those Quranic verses which state plainly the Prophet's humanness, including the ones in which Allah gently admonishes him for his inadvertent slips.

Neal Robinson draws attention to the interpolation of some typical Barelvi beliefs in *Kanz al-Iman* which have made their way into Shah Faridul Haque's English version of the same.[4] The general import of the opening verse of Surah al-Najm is given this twist: "By the lovely shining star Muhammad when he descended from the Ascension." Needless to say, the verse contains no allusion to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) or his Ascension. Likewise, the opening verses of Surah al-Alaq which state "God's beneficence to humankind as a whole" appear in their mistranslation with "a cluster of Barelwi doctrines" in Haque's version thus:

> The Most Affectionate taught the Quran to His beloved. He crated Muhammad, the soul of humanity. He taught him speech regarding whatever had already happened and whatever will happen.

The level of Haque's translation is pitiably low, betraying the translator's poor knowledge of the target language -English. The work is further marred by typographical errors. Far from a blatantly sectarian translation and interpretation of the Quran, which garbles the meaning and message of the Quran and confounds average readers, there is a pressing need for translations which enable reader to gain sound understanding of the life-giving message of the Quran.

Publication details of the first edition:

Karachi, Pakistan, Darooul Ulum Amjadia, 1988. 912 pages.

Number of Editions: 2

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[4] Neal Robinson, "Sectarian and Ideological bias in Muslim Translations of the Quran," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 8:3 (1997), 263-265.

24
Auolakh, Abdul Majeed
The Holy Quran
(1990s)

This work published first in Lahore, Pakistan in 1966 has been reprinted recently in India. More significant, however, is its subtitle: "The Holy Quran: With non-sectarian, modern and simple translation, including precise transliteration and authentic explanations based on *Kanzull Imaan* by Dr. A. Majeed Auolakh, Imam-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat Maulana Muhammad Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi Qadri." However, notwithstanding its claim to be a "non-sectarian" work, it is very much representative of the Barelvi sect, known so in view of the allegiance of its members to a Muslim scholar of Bareilly, a town in north India-Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi (1856-1921). It also is a bi-lingual work, containing Barelvi's Urdu translation of the Quran, *Kanz al-Iman*, which came out in 1910 and its English version rendered by Auolakh.

It thus stands out as the fourth English translation of Barelvi's *Kanz al-Iman*; the first one was done by Ali Ahmad Khan Jallendari; the second by Dr. Hanif Akhtar Fatmi Qadri Naushahi (Lahore, Pakistan, Quran and Co. 6. 1970s) and the third one by Shah Faridul Haque (Karachi, Pakistan, Darul Uloom Amjadia, 1988). Being one of the most important texts of the Barelvi school of thought, *Kanz al-Iman* has been re-issued several times since 1910. The same consideration impelled Auolakh to bring out another English translation for the English-speaking constituency of Barelvi school who have emigrated to the West.

Raza Khan Barelvi was swayed by certain aspects of popular Islam and pseudo-mysticism and spirituality in his interpretation of Islam. He laid disproportionate emphasis on rituals and the outward display of commitment to Islam. He sought to sanction and sanctify grave worship, saint worship and fallacious notions about intercession.

This was partly owing to the incursion of Hindu beliefs into the Muslim polity in the Indian subcontinent as a result of the centuries-old long and close interaction at every conceivable level between these two major faith communities. Another odd feature of Barelvi's devotional theology is his exaggeration of the Prophet Muhammad's (*saas*) status. He enhances it beyond permissible limits under the pretext of expressing deep love and veneration for the Prophet. Since this stance runs counter to Shariah, mainstream Muslims oppose and denounce it. As a result, Muslims of the Indo-Pak subcontinent have been divided into two hostile camps of Deobandis and Barelvis. The former represent mainstream Islam while the latter are followers of popular Islam as professed and practised by Mawlana Raza Khan Barelvi. The recent history of the Muslim community in the region has been tainted by this sectarian divide.

Barelvi's peculiar sectarian view undergirds his major work *Kanz al-Iman*, of which the work under review is the English translation. His unorthodox views, which have been branded as an innovation in matters of faith, come to the fore especially in the following instances:

a. It is commonplace that throughout the Quran, Allah addresses the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) as "O Messenger or Prophet.." Barelvi feels that such a form of address is beneath the Prophet's august position. Therefore he makes it a point to interpolate such honorific appellations as "O My beloved Prophet Muhammad" (Al-Baqarah 2:258, p. 67), "O beloved Rasul Muhammad" (Ali Imran 3:20, p. 78) "Please declare, O beloved Prophet" (Ali Imran 3:99, p. 91),

   "O beloved" (Ali Imran 3:176, p. 103) and in all other such instances.

b. Barelvi firmly holds the view that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) possessed the knowledge of *al-Ghayb* (all that lies beyond human sense perception). Swayed by this whimsical notion he twists the import of relevant Quranic verses, for example, 50 of al-An'am and 31 of Hud.

c. Barelvi goes to great lengths in offering a garbled and convoluted elucidation of the Quranic verses which plainly state the Prophet's humanness, his occasional lapses over which Allah gently admonished him and his unawareness of matters not divulged to him by Allah.

A. Majeed Auolakh worked as Chaplain in US prisons and as part of his community work in the US he realized the presence of Barelvis among the Muslim immigrants there. In the work under study Auolakh has omitted Mawlana Barelvi's notes for the reasons best known to him. Owing to this omission the work is free, in large measure, from the errors of perspective peculiar to Mawlana Barelvi. However, it has resulted in some equally disturbing and deplorable shortcomings in the work. Although Auolakh claims in his Preface to have consulted nineteen translations of the Quran in Urdu, English and Persian for his venture, his work faithfully reproduces the views of only Mawlana Barelvi. His narrow, sectarian bias in reinforced further by his extensive eulogy of Mawlana Barelvi (pp. 1010-1015), seeking to project him as one of the greatest Muslim scholars of all time.

Worse, Auolakh's English rendering is disfigured by numerous mistakes of grammar, usage and spelling. The target readership is bound to be put off by its poor presentation and faulty expressions. It is inexplicable how the author who apparently lived for years in the US, let such mistakes creep into his work. Some of the unacceptable, rather outlandish expressions employed in his work are: "foul flesh" for "forbidden meat" (p. 997), "modality" (p. 968) for "mode," "hotty" (p. 968) for "haughty," "despite of" for "despite," "front verse" (p. 969) for the "first" or "opening verse," "trillion-folds" (p. 969) for "billions," "bowed-down" (p. 969) for "humbled" and "setsun" (p. 970) for "sunset." On a single page (p. 968) as many as twenty superlatives are used for Surah al-Kawthar. Spelling mistakes abound on almost every page. Equally haphazard and unconventional is the transliteration. Take the following as illustrative: "Ommahaat" (p. 1002) for *Ummihat*, "Zullkarnyn" (p. 1009) for Dhu al-Qarnayn, and "Assraa" (p. 968) for al-Isra.

The work contains only the translation of the Quran and is devoid of any explanatory notes. As a result, readers get no elucidation of Quranic terms, concepts or allusions. The Barelvi sectarian stance is to the fore in Auolakh's introductory note, a Brief Biography of the Last Ideal of Allah, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pp. 5-40) and in his bare translation of Surah al-Duha. The work thus largely fails in achieving its main goal of advancing the readers' understanding of the Quran. Appended to the work, however, is an introduction to each Surah, which attempts to provide readers with some idea of the context and themes of the Surahs. The three indexes at the end (pp. 978-1009) display Auolakh's assiduity in identifying the subjects, persons and places referred to in the Quran. As compared to this work, Shah Faridul Haque's earlier rendering of Mawlana Barelvi's Kanz al-Iman is much better. Those interested in the Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi's peculiar views should better refer to Haque's version, for Auolakh's translation lacks any merit to recommend itself.

Publication details of the first edition:

Karachi, Pakistan, Awais Company, 1996. 1015 pages, ISBN: 9698320016.

Number of Editions: 2

25
Arafat, Q.
The Quran: The Conclusive Word of God
(1991)

A translation should give access to the original; to realize that purpose it should keep scrupulously close to the sense of that original. Q. Arafat's translation, *The Quran: The Conclusive Word of God*, disappoints on both counts. He may have been inspired by a pious enthusiasm to present the meaning and message of the Quran, as is apparent from his prefatory remarks. But his idiosyncratic preferences have intruded too far into his interpretation of the original to realize that objective. He writes, for example: "The Quran is thus originator of the Department of Fingerprints, and genetic Fingerprints" (p. viii). His special fondness for discovering popularized versions of current scientific ideas in the Quranic text surfaces recurrently in his notes. Throughout, he speaks triumphantly of some scientific law which, in his judgement, the Quran revealed 'fourteen hundred years ago.' For example, he mentions 'the biological truth' (p. 196), 'planned cells' (p. 208), 'reproduction cells' (p. 647), 'molecules' (p. 681), 'fusion of opposite cells' (p. 704), 'astronomy and astrophysics' (p. 705), 'solar system and the laws of gravitation' (p. 765), 'chemical, biological and scientific laws' (p. 770), 'geometrical truth and the angular distance' (p. 796), 'instruments' (p. 851), 'Vernal Equinox' (p. 866), 'biological truth about reproduction' (p. 943), 'genetic fingerprinting' (p. 958), 'gametes' (p. 961), 'geographical truth' (p. 968), 'radiation and velocity of currents' (p. 971), and 'male gametes' (p. 996) in the Quran. This misplaced and disproportionate emphasis on reading scientific terms and concepts into the Quran strikes a jarring note.

Arafat's above flawed approach is reflective of what Neal Robinson brands as "the fashion for Scientific Exegesis:"

> While Sayyid Ahmad Khan was endeavouring to show that the Quran was compatible with modern science because it did not require belief in supernatural miracles, his younger contemporaries in Egypt were busy formulating a different response to the shock produced by contact with technologically superior Europeans. In effect they argue that the Quran was to Muhammad and his contemporaries -things which were discovered by European scientists many centuries later... The roots of this movement, which is generally known as 'scientific exegesis,...' in the modern era its origins may be traced back to two Egyptians: a. physician by the name of Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Iskandarani and 'Abdullah Fikhri Basha ...[5]

Arafat's rendering of certain familiar Quranic expressions is, for the most part, unhappy and uneven As for example, he translates both *Sirat al-Mustaqim* (p.1) and *Al-Huda* as the 'Revealed Way' (pp. 1 and 144), *din* as 'Harvest' (p. 1027), *Al-Shayatin* as 'evil-manufacturers' (p. 213) and as 'the dilated necks of cobras' (p. 718) *al-Kitab* as 'Our Omniscience' (p. 196) and *al-Zalimin* as 'aristocrats' (p. 198).

He appears to have followed a most erratic procedure (if any) for transliteration with such bizarre consequences as *tag-va* (p. 115), *re-ba* (p. 651), *gafoor* (p. 920), *asab* (p. 142), *ahl al-Ketab* (p. 154), *ma-ta-a* (p. 142) and *quwwat* (p. 996).

The publisher has done well to append a long list of corrections. Nonetheless, several factual mistakes are not taken into account of in his list. What Arafat says about Surahs 17 and 113 is actually true for Surah 21 and 112 (p. xiv). The statement that the Quran championed the cause of slaves as early as the '6th Christian century' (p. 139) ought to read the '7th century'. His omission of *Risalat* as one of the three fundamental articles of Islamic faith (p. 191) is gravely misleading.

Reading Arafat's work, particularly his notes, it is not difficult to see how his dogmatic presupposition has vitiated his exegesis. Here

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[5] Neal Robbinson, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translation of the Quran," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 8:3, (1997), 271.

is his judgement on a difficult political issue: “The Quran does not recognize Kingship. Mark the word “deliberations” in the verse, the Quran *thus* upholds democracy” (p. 785, italics added).

There is no reference in the text for the note which appears on page 987. This is a work of careless enthusiasm in all respects, and because Arafat’s frequent transpositions and additions are intrusions into the Quran, the carelessness is unpardonable the piety of a wrong-headed enthusiasm does not mitigate its being wrong and seriously so.

Publication details of the first edition:

Leicester, UK, Arafat Islamic Publications, 1991, 1030 pages.

Number of Editions: 1

26

Hasan, Mahmoodul and Usmani, Shabbir Ahmad

The Noble Quran: Tafseer-e Usmani

(1991)

Since 1970s, a noteworthy trend in the wider field of English translations of the Quran is the appearance of English versions of translations originally rendered and published in Urdu. Instances of this 'translation of the translations' activity are the publication of English versions of the following Quranic scholars of the Indian subcontinent - Abul Kalam Azad, Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi and Mufti Muhammad Shafi.' *The Noble Quran*, the English rendering of the original Urdu translation and its accompanying commentary by two leading twentieth-century 'ulema' of the subcontinent - Mahmoodul Hasan (1851-1920) and Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (1887-1949) is the latest reflection of this trend.

The swelling number of English-speaking readers and a proclivity for interpreting things Quranic in line with the stance of particular schools of thought may be identified as the main reasons for the emergence and growing popularity of this trend. Furthermore, most of these works, written in Urdu in the first half of the twentieth century stand out as a cogent, well-articulated Muslim response to the twin challenges of secularism and materialism faced more acutely in the British colonial Indian subcontinent than in the rest of the Muslim world. This explains the compelling reason behind the issue of these works in English so that new generations of Muslims, born and brought up in the West, may draw upon them for gaining conviction in faith, just as these works, in their original Urdu, had helped an earlier generation, almost half a century ago.

The presence of millions of Muslims of subcontinental origin in the West is the main stimulus for such publications. Nonetheless, it all amounts to importing a local culture to alien lands. Moreover, these

works, representative as they are of certain Muslim schools of thought, are both born of and reinforce a narrow, rigid interpretation of the Quran, often at the expense of addressing larger, contemporary issues. Being wedded unflinchingly to the ideal of vindicating the adequacy, nay supremacy, of the particular school of *fiqh* which they represent, or in grappling with local issues ranging at the time of their composition, these works tend to represent only a partial view of things Islamic.

Another unpalatable feature of most of these works published in the subcontinent is the miserably low level of the translation, owing to the translators' linguistic incompetence and their lack of familiarity with the style and nuances of academic and idiomatic English. As a result, far from helping readers gain a better understanding of the Quran, some of these poorly produced works even put readers off. The problem is further aggravated by an equally low standard of printing, layout and production.

The Noble Quran is an important addition to this sub-genre, being co-authored by two outstanding Deobandi scholars of the subcontinent, namely Shaykh al-Hind Mahmoodul Hasan and Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani. The former is the translator of the Quranic text while the latter the author of the exhaustive commentary. That it is a highly-rated and authentic *tafsir* in Urdu is evident from its numerous editions re-issued in both India and Pakistan and its printing at the King Fahd Quran Complex, Madina in 1989 and its mass distribution by the Department of Religious Affairs, Government of Saudi Arabia. The title page of *The Noble Quran*, however, makes no reference to Mahmoodul Hasan as the co-author, which is both odd and inexplicable. What is more irksome is that the work instead contains a glowing tribute to Ashfaq Ahmad, the English translator. Nor does the Preface to the work allude, even in passing, to the significant fact that Mahmoodul Hasan's Urdu translation is actually a version in plain Urdu of the earlier translation of Shah Abdul Qadir, the first major translator of the Quran into Urdu. The wide range of borrowings from Shah Abdul Qadir's *Mudih al-Quran* in *The Noble Quran*

corroborates this point. The English translator should have drawn attention to the important genesis of this work, which would, in turn, have placed the work under review in its proper historical context.

As already observed in the opening part of this review, these works are vitiated by an excessive interest in local issues. An illustration in point is the following remark in the Quranic commentary, though this gem is the English translator's contribution by way of an interpolation into Usmani's original note: 'Islam is not the System of Mustafa as some Pseudo-Islamists in Pakistan have sloganized; it is the System of God given through Mustafa (peace and blessings be upon him) to mankind' (Vol. 1, p. 489). The translator is guilty on two counts then: firstly, of having taken too much liberty, and secondly of fanning sectarian differences. Furthermore, he goes in certain instances, too far in interpolating his own views, without specifying authorship. As a result, one is faced with the odd situation that the work contains comments on the political events of Pakistan of 1980s whereas the original author, Shabbir Ahmad Usmani had died in 1949.

The following are pitiable examples of the translator's almost total lack of familiarity with idiomatic English, as a result of which the work is more likely to baffle readers, than enlighten them in their study and understanding of the Quran:

1. The main idea behind the similitude of garment in the close intimation, intermixation and interconnection between husband and wife (Vol. 1, p. 94).
2. ... full satisfaction from error, forgetfulness and detriment to anyone's rights also lies in a written document (Vol. 1, p. 163).
3. And when you journey in the land there is no sin upon you that you somewhat cut short from your prayer. (Vol. 1, p. 381)
4. And whoso leaves his homeland in the way of God, he shall find in comparison many refuges and plenty. And whoso gets out of his house emigrating towards God and His Messenger, and then death seizes him, got ascertained his reward (thawab) with God (Vol. 1, p. 380).

5. No doubt, We sent down to thee the Book truthful that thou mayst judge between the people by that which God may bring home to thee (Vol. 1, p. 384).
6. At this the present verse was sent down, and the response is tendered in the form of blames in this section, and the researched answer is given... God at length also pardoned it (Vol. 1, p. 408).
7. Some of the most prominent Messengers are elaborated in the verse (Vol. 1, p. 414).
8. The Muslims are again forbidden to keep intimate relations with the enemies of Islam under another effective head (Vol. 1, p. 495).
9. Submission to God's command and negation of wisdom's (wrong) interpretation is the straight path (Vol. 1, p. 622).
10. The people of the Taurat brought about many ways. Thou shouldst not make research into them-which is right and which is wrong. Thou shouldst stand on thy own correct way. In Religion there should be made no difference or division in things of believing in, and those belonging to actions or deeds, if there are several ways of them, there is no harm (Vol. 1, p. 644).
11. These events took strong roots of enmity in their hearts and the battlefield began to thunder with the rattling noise of binomial weapons (Vol. 1, p. 654).

In sum, this work is of limited value, in terms of its narrow approach, its neglect of current issues and its translator's interpolation of his whimsical views in a posthumous publication.

Publication details of the first edition:

Lahore, Pakistan, Aalameen Publications, 1994, 3 volumes, 2643 pages, ISBN 969-8187010.

Number of Editions: 3

27
Zidan, Ahmad and Zidan, Dina
Translation of the Glorious Quran
(1991)

So many English translations of the Qur'an are available that a new one needs to justify itself convincingly. The Zidans' recent translation, Translation of the Glorious Qur'an, regrettably, is not justified on any grounds, for it borders on plagiarism. To my shock and disbelief, I discovered that passage after passage appears, with a sprinkling of adaptation, to have been lifted from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation of the Qur'an (1934-37). In the following examples, quotations from the Zidans' translation precede their counterparts in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's:

1. Solomon said: "We will see whether you have told the truth or whether you have lied,

   Go with this letter of mine, and deliver it to them, then stand aside and see what answer they return" (al-Naml, 27:27-8, Zidans, p. 274).

   (Solomon) said: "Soon shall we see whether thou hast told the truth or lied!

   Go thou, with this letter of mine, and deliver it to them; then draw back from them, and (wait to see) what answer they return" (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Maryland, Amana Corporation, 1989, pp. 944-5).

2. She said: "Surely, kings, when they enter a town, ruin it, and make the noblest of its people abased, and thus do they behave" (al-Naml, 27:34, Zidans, p. 274-5).

   She said: 'Kings, when they enter a country, despoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest thus do they behave' (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 945).

3. Alif Lam Ra. A Book (the Qur'an) which We have revealed to you; that you might lead people out of darkness into Light, by the leave of their Lord, to the Way of the Almighty, the Worthy of All Praise; (Ibrahim 14:1, Zidans, p. 175)

   Alif Lam Ra. A Book which We have revealed unto thee, in order that thou mightiest lead mankind out of the depths of darkness into light-by the leave of their Lord to the way of Him the Exalted in Power, web Worthy of all Praise (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 603).

4. And fight in the cause of GOD those who fight you, but do not transgress limits, surely GOD loves not the transgressors (Al-Baqarah, 2: 190, Zidans, p. 27).

   Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 76).

5. Our Lord! We believe in what You have revealed and we follow the Messenger, so write us down among them who bear witness (Ali Imran 3:53, Zidans, p. 43)

   Our Lord! We believe in what Thou hast revealed, and we follow the Messenger; then write us down among those who bear witness (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 141).

6. If good befalls you, it grieves them, but if a misfortune befalls you they say: "We took indeed our precautions beforehand" and they turn away rejoicing; (al-Tawbah 9:50, Zidans, p. 132).

   If good befalls thee, it grieves them; but if a misfortune befalls thee, they say: "We took indeed our precautions beforehand" and they turn away rejoicing, (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 453).

7. The Arabs of the desert are the worst in disbelief and hypocrisy, and most fitted to be in ignorance of the limits which GOD has revealed to His Messenger, and GOD is All-Knowing, All-Wise (al-Tawbah 9:97, Zidans, p. 137).

The Arabs of the desert are the worst in unbelief and hypocrisy, and most fitted to be in ignorance of the command which Allah hath sent down to His Messenger, but Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 465-6).

8. The brothers said: “By GOD, you know well that we came not to work corruption in the land, and we are not thieves” (Yusuf 12:73, Zidans, p. 166).

   The brothers said: “By Allah! Well you know we came not to make mischief in the land, and we are not thieves” (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 571).

9. GOD is the One Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see, then He firmly established Himself on the Throne. And GOD subjected the sun and the moon, each one runs its course to an appointed term. He directs the affair, He explains the Signs in detail, that you will be certain of the encounter with your Lord (Al-Rad 13:2, Zidans, p. 170).

   Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see; then He established Himself on the Throne (of authority); He has subjected the sun and the moon (to his Law)! Each one runs (its course) for a term appointed. He doth regulate all affairs, explaining the Signs in detail that you may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 568-9).

10. And they ascribe to GOD that which they hate for themselves, and their tongues utter the falsehood that all good things shall be theirs. Without a doubt, the Fire is for them, and they shall be hastened to it without delay (al-Nahl 16: 62, Zidans, p. 189).

    They attribute to Allah what they hate (for themselves) and their tongues assert the falsehood that all good things are for themselves: without doubt for them is the Fire, and they will be the first to be hastened on it (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 652).

11. And when you recite the Qur'an, We place between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, a veil unseen (al-Isra 17: 45, Zidans, p. 198).

    When thou dost recite the Qur'an, We put, between thee and those who believe not in the Hereafter, a veil invisible (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 686).

12. So they departed, until, when they reached the people of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused to give them hospitality. There they found a wall about to fall down, and so he set it up straight. (Moses) said: "If you had wished you could surely have exacted payment for that" (al-Kahf 18:77, Zidans, p. 210).

    Then they proceeded: until, when they came to the inhabitants of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused them hospitality. They found there a wall on the point of falling down, but he set it up straight. (Moses) said: "If thou hadst wished surely thou couldst have exacted some recompense for it" (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 728).

Apart from these unacknowledged borrowings from Yusuf Ali, the Zidans' work lacks the Quranic text and any explanatory notes. A work aimed at English-speaking readers and claiming to be 'an accurate and uncomplicated rendering of the meaning of the Glorious Qur'an (p.5), surely needs to provide some background information. It suffers also from other defects, where the translators have ventured to put forward their own work. The Qur'anic expression ahsan taqwim is rendered most clumsily: 'fashioning mankind according to the best organizational plan' (p. 486). They appear to have taken too much liberty in translating Surah al-Qadr, 97. It is difficult to see what prompted them to insert the expression 'the night of al-Qadr in every verse of the Surah whereas in the Quranic text it does not occur in the last two verses. The use of capitalized 'GOD' throughout is not attractive: perhaps this was done to distinguish the text from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation. Neal Robinson cites several instances of the faulty transliteration of Surah titles in this work[1]. More importantly, Robinson notes in

Zidans' translation the strand of "scientific exegesis," which is borrowed, once again, from Maurice Bucaille:

> ... when dealing with the passages which refer to God's power and beneficence in his creation, the Zidans give them a scientific ring. Even here, however, they seem not to have made any original contribution, for their translation often closely resembles that proposed by the French surgeon, Maurice Bucaille.[6]

For pressing home the above point Robinson cites Zidans' flawed translation of Verses 66 of al-Nahl, 6 of al-Tariq and 47 of al-Dha riyat.[7]

It truly grieves the heart to acknowledge that there are Muslim scholars who show a lack of scruples in even so noble a venture as presenting the meaning and message of Allah's Word.

Publication details of the first edition:

London, Ahmad Zidan, 1991. 505 pages, ISBN: 0951811509

Number of Editions: 2

Other Reviews:

Mir, Mustansir, "Review," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 6:2 (1995), 256-257.

Neal Robinson, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Qur'an," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations,* 8:3 (1997). Especially pp. 272-274 for a critique on the Zidans' translation.

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6 Neal Robinson, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Qur'an," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations,* 8:3 (1997), 272.

7 Ibid., 272.

Ibid., 272-273.

28
Ozek, Ali et al
The Holy Quran
(1992)

It is especially gratifying to see this new English translation of the Qur'an published from Turkey by a team of four competent Muslim scholars. Equally welcome and reassuring is the fact the work is fully in consonance with the viewpoint of Muslim orthodoxy. On both counts, it seems to answer completely Kamal Ataturk's brazen attempts to banish Islam from Turkey and forcibly turn the country, a centuries-old bastion of Islamic faith, culture and civilization, into a secular, liberal, nation-state, cast in a purely Western mould. For years, the revival of Islam in Turkey, at both the social and political levels, has been making the headlines. The appearance of this translation is further proof of the Turkish Muslims' unflinching commitment to Islam and their earnest desire to practise and preach it.

Given the peculiar religio-political conditions prevailing in Turkey, it becomes all the more important to find out what prompted this team of Turkish scholars, all of whom are, significantly enough, distinguished faculty members of Turkish universities, to undertake this venture. The translators' account is worth quoting:

> Firstly, the most commonly-reprinted translations are written in an archaic, Biblical style, which, while dignified and melodious, is sometimes difficult for a new generation...
>
> Secondly, the growing number of conversions to Islam in the English-speaking world, particularly in countries such as the United States, South Africa and Fiji, together with increased interest in Islam among non-Muslims, has created an urgent need for a wider range of translations, to suit all orientations and educational levels.

> Thirdly, a number of translations have been done by non-Muslims with no direct experience of Islam or by members of sectarian groupings, such as the Qadiyanis. Many offerings of this type contain interpretations which are eccentric and speculative...
>
> Fourthly, the existing translations are usually bereft of any commentary or explanation, leaving the text almost unintelligible in many places. In the present work, we have tried to include some explanations, from a number of classical commentaries in Arabic and Turkish, as well as the English language commentary of Abdullah Yusuf Ali (pp.-viii).

It is a great pleasure to learn that the translators' intention is not merely to meet a local need, but rather, in keeping with the universal message of the Qur'an and their obligation as Muslims, to propagate it, to offer an accurate and clear rendering of the meaning and message of the Qur'an for the benefit of non-Arabic speaking readers.

The Preface, reflecting as it does the writer's firm grounding in sound Islamic scholarship, deals with some features of the Qur'an, namely its gradual revelation, its status as the Scripture, as a miracle in every respect, as a liturgical text, and its universality. It concludes with this exhilarating note:

> The influence of the Book on today's world is incalculable. It appears that in almost every country, young people are finding new inspiration in its message. And in the West too, our experience is that conversions take place in many cases through the channel of the Qur'an, often in the most unexpected way. Here again we are faced with the Book's miraculous nature, which seems certain to continue its influence in our age, and, God willing, until the Day of Judgement (p.xiv).

As for the translation, it provides a clear, fluent reading, greatly enhanced by many explanatory notes all contained within parenthesis. For an uninitiated reader of the Qur'an, these notes provide valuable information on the background, circumstantial setting and elucidation of the Quranic allusions to history. Moreover, they fill in the gaps for rendering a coherent, sustained

account of the Qur'anic stories. In gleaning this material, the translators have tapped classical, authentic sources extensively, and have refrained from parading their personal, nay whimsical, opinions as the import of the Qur'an. That they have drawn too heavily on their predecessors, especially Abdullah Yusuf Ali, in providing their explanatory notes, is borne out when one compares the notes in the two works. Although the translators speak of their indebtedness to their predecessors on this count (p.viii), their borrowing is quite substantial; they have simply lifted the following exegetical notes from Abdullah Yusuf Ali. All references are to Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (Brentwood, Amana Corporation, 1992). The relevant page numbers of the translation under review are followed by those of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's within parenthesis, indicating that the explanatory note is taken verbatim from the latter:

> p.166 (n.1103, p.384); (n.1107, p.384); p.168 (n.1121, p.388); p.172 (n.1149, p.396); p.309 (n.2521, p.760); p.313 (n.2560, p.771); p.316 (n.2601, p.780); p.319 (n.2640, p.788); p.331 (nn.2773-6,p.822); p.333 (n.2795, p.827); p.334 (nn.2800-4, pp.828-9); p.335 (nn. 2806 and 2815, pp. 829 and 831); p.336 (nn.2819 and 2825, pp.833 and 834); p.337(nn.2826, 2831 and 2833,pp.834,835 and 836); p.338 (nn.2838, 2840 and 2844-5, pp.837, 838 and 839 and n.2845, p.841), p.340 (nn.2861-2, p.842); p.341 (nn.2872 and 2876, pp.845 and 846); p.342 (nn.2878 and 2881, pp.846 and 847); p.343 nn. 2895-6, p.850); p.344 (nn.2904-7, p.852); p.345 (nn.2949-50, p.862).

Likewise, in the translation of the text there is, at places, almost a word-for-word reproduction of Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's earlier English translation, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (1930), as is evident from the following examples. The translation of some selected verses in the work under review is juxtaposed with Pickthall's earlier version so as to give an idea of the range and nature of the former's borrowings:

(1) Those who will be gathered on their faces unto Hell: such are worse in plight and further from the right road. (al-Furqan 25:34, p.362.)

Those who will be gathered on their faces unto hell: such are worse in plight and further from the right road (M.M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, New Delhi, Islamic Book Services. All subsequent references are to this edition. al-Furqan 25: 34, p.261.)

(2) And Noah's folk, when they denied the Messengers, We drowned them and made of them a portent for mankind. We have prepared a painful doom for evil-doers. (al-Furqan 25: 37, p.362.)

And Noah's folk, when they denied the Messengers, We drowned them and made of them a portent for mankind. We have prepared a painful doom for evil-doers. (Pickthall, p.261.)

(3) Their reckoning is only my Lord's concern, if you but knew. And I am not to repulse believers. I am only a plain warner. The said: "If you cease not, O Noah, you will surely be among those stoned to death." He said: "My Lord! My own folk deny me. Therefore judge you between us, a judgement, and save me and those believers who are with me." And We saved him and those with him in the laden ship. (al-Shu'ara' 26: 11-19, p.371.)

"Lo!, their reckoning is my lord's concern, if ye but knew. And I am not here to repulse believers. I am only a plain warner." They said: "If thou cease not, O Noah, thou wilt surely be among those stoned to death." He said: "My lord! Lo! My own folk deny me. Therefore, judge Thou between us, a conclusive judgement, and save me and those believers who are with me." And We saved him and those with him in the laden ship. (Pickthall, al-Shu'ara' 26: 11-19, p.268.)

(4) Exalt not yourself against me, but come unto me as those who surrender. She said: "O Chieftains! Pronounce (advice) for me in my case. I decide no case till you are present with me. They said: "We are lords of might and of great prowess, but it is for you to command: so consider what you will command." (al-Naml 27: 31-3, p.378.)

Exalt not yourself against me, but come unto me as those who surrender. She said: “O Chieftains! Pronounce for me in my case. I decide no case till you are present with me.” They said: “We are lords of might and lords of great prowess, but it is for thee to command: so consider what thou wilt command.” (Pickthall, al-Naml 27: 31-3, p.274.)

(5) Then there came unto him one of the two women, walking shyly. She said: “Lo! My father invites you, that he may reward you with a payment for that you did water the flock for us.” Then, when he came unto him and toid him the whole story, he said: “Fear not! You have escaped from the wrongdoing folk.” One of the two women said: “O my father! Hire him! For the best man that you can hire is the strong, the praiseworthy.” He said: “Indeed I desire to marry you to one of these two daughters of mine, on condition that you hire yourself to me for the term of eight years. Then if you complete ten, it will be of your accord. You will find me of the righteous.” (al-Qasas 28: 25-7, p.387.)

Then there came unto him one of the two women, walking shyly. She said: “Lo! My father biddeth thee, that he may reward thee with a payment for that thou didst water the flock for us.” Then, when he came unto him and told him the whole story he said: “Fear not! Thou hast escaped from the wrong doing folk.” One of the two women said: “O my father! Hire him! For the best man that thou canst hire is the strong, the praiseworthy.” He told: “Lo! I fain would marry thee to one of these two daughters of mine, on condition that thou hirest thyself to me for the term of eight pilgrimages. Then if thou completest ten, it will be of thine own accord, for I would be righteous.” (Pickthall, al-Qasas 28:25-7, pp.279-80.)

(6) Or lest you should say: If the Scripture had been revealed to us, we surely had been better guided than they. Now there has come to you a clear proof from your Lord, a guidance and a mercy; and who does greater wrong than he who denies the revelations of Allah, and turns away from them? We award to

those who turn away from Our revelations a severe penalty because of their aversion. (al-An'am 6: 157, p.148.)

Or lest ye should say: If the Scripture had been revealed unto us, we surely had been better guided than are they. Now hath there come unto you a clear proof from your Lord! A guidance and a mercy, and who doth greater wrong than he who denieth the revelations of Allah, and turneth away from them? We award unto those who turn away from Our revelations an evil doom because of their aversion. (Pickthall, al-An'am 6: 157, p.120.)

(7) We divided them into twelve tribes, nations; and We inspired Moses, when his people asked him for water, saying: "Smite with your staff the rock!" And there gushed forth therefrom twelve springs, so that each tribe knew their drinking place. And We caused the white cloud to overshadow them and sent down for them the manna and the quails, saying: "Eat of the good things with which We have provided you." They wronged Us not, but they were wont to wrong themselves. And when it was said to them: "Dwell in this township and eat therefrom whence you will, and say: "Repentance" and enter the gate prostrate; We shall forgive you your sins; We shall increase reward for the right-doers." But those of them who did wrong changed the word which had been told them for another saying, and We sent down upon them wrath from heaven for their wrongdoing. (al-A'raf 7:160-2, p.170.)

We divided them into twelve tribes, nations; and We inspired Moses, when his people asked him for water, saying: "Smite with thy staff the rock!" And there gushed forth therefrom twelve springs so that each tribe knew their drinking place. And We caused the white cloud to overshadow them and sent down for them the manna and the quails, saying: Eat of the good things wherewith We have provided you. They wronged us not, but they were wont to wrong themselves. And when it was said unto them: Dwell in this township and eat therefrom whence ye will, and say: "Repentance," and enter the gate prostrate;

> We shall forgive you your sins; We shall increase the reward for the right-doers. But those of them who did wrong changed the word which had been told them for another saying, and We sent down upon them wrath from heaven for their wrong-doing. (al-A'raf 7: 160-2, p.113)

Significantly enough, this incidence of generous borrowings from Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Pickthall is found inostly in Surahs 22-39 (pp. 331-466) assigned to one particular translator out of a team of four. His unscrupulousness has regrettably cast a shadow on the credentials of the whole work.

Another irksome feature is the high number of typographical errors in the Index (pp. 616-23). Mercifully, though, the printer's devil has not played havoc with the main body of the work.

This criticism apart, the appearance of this work, a notable addition to the subject, is to be welcomed unreservedly for both its academic and symbolic importance. Muslims the world over fervently look forward to additional publications on Islam by Turkish Muslim scholars.

Publication details of the first edition:

Istanbul, Turkey, Ilmi Nesriyat, 1992. 623 pages.

Number of Editions: 4

29
Ahmed, Mohamed and Samira
The Koran: Complete Dictionary and Literal Translation
(1994)

This work by a father and daughter team fails to deliver what its title promises. It is neither a Quran dictionary nor a worth-reading translation. It was a too ambitions and unwieldy task to be taken up in less than 500 pages. Furthermore, yoking together a dictionary and a translation in a work is an absurd proposition. Both of these are totally different, independent assignments to be carried by subject experts possessing command over not only English, lexical and Arabic tafsir studies but also presentation skills. This unimaginative undertaking has backfired, for it does not serve the purpose of either a Quranic dictionary or a translation. Ahmed and Samira reject summarily the existing translations for being sectarian and too subjective in their annotations. This charge is only partly true. Several translations with copious explanatory notes and other scholarly paraphernalia afford those new to the Arabic Quran an excellent opportunity to understand well the meaning and message of the Quran in English. The authors' choice of producing a bare literal translation interspersed with the English equivalents of some Quranic expressions pitiably fails in helping the English speaking readers. Illustrative of this are the following instances of their mistranslation in atrocious English and such obsession with offering a literal version which borders on absurdity:

a) God's name, the Merciful, the Merciful/Most Merciful. The gratitude/thanks/praise to God, the creation's altogether's (universe's) Lord. The merciful, the merciful/most merciful. Owner/possessor (of) the Judgement Day/Resurrection Day. (Only) You we worship, and (only) You we seek help from. Guide us (to) the way, road, the straight/direct. (The) way/road

(of) those You blessed on them, not (those) the angered on them, and nor the misguided.

(Al-Fatihah 1:1-7, p.1)

b) How do you disbelieve with God and you were deads,

(Al-Baqarah 2:28, p.3)

c) He forgave on him, that He is.

(Al-Baqarah 2:37, p.4)

d) …so be terrified/monkish of Me.

(Al-Baqarah 2:40, p.4)

e) And that from the Book's People whom (E) believes with God

(Ali Imran 3:119, p.47)

f) If they were not given/handed from it, then they are hating/becoming angry.

(Al-Tawbah 9:58, p.126)

g) "Our Lord, that I resided/inhabited from my descendants at a valley of no plants/crops at Your House/Home."

(Ibraheem 14:37, p.173)

h) Those whom they are about their prayers negligent/inattentive.

(Al-Maun 107:5, p.478)

i) Father of the flame of a smokeless fire's (known as Prophet Muhammad's uncle) hand was destroyed/lost, and destroyed/lost.

(Al-Masad 111:1, p.479)

Far from facilitating readers' understanding of the Quran, the above examples of their incompressible rendering are bound to confound readers. The above work does not serve the purpose of a dictionary either. For a few Quranic expressions appear with their English equivalents, without any regard for their context and connotations. For example, *dharaba* in Al-Nisa 4:34 is rendered as "ignore/ disregard/push them." It is not clarified as to which specific course of action is to be taken regarding a disobedient wife. More grotesque is the translation of *alladhina hadu* (Al-Nisa 4:46) as

"For those who repented/guided/Jews." (p.55) It is evident from the context that the Quran addresses in the above verse Jews and censures them for tampering with their Scripture. How can they be designated as "those who repented/guided"? This is the height of literalism.

Even a faithful literal translation in elegant English is of little help for those new to the Quran. They should be first introduced to the context of Quranic Surahs/verses and Quranic terms and concepts, and occasionally, their circumstantial setting should be explained. Prefatory notes to Surahs, Glossary, and above all, brief, precise annotations hold the key to conveying to readers the meaning and message of the Quran. In their absence, readers do not and cannot derive any guidance from a literal translation alone. Without specifying the addressees of Surahs Al-Zuha, Al-Sharh, Al-Kawthar, and Al-Nasr, readers are left clueless: Who is obliged to perform certain duties? Who is to thank Allah in a particular manner? Whose enemy is despised?

Ahmed and Samira are guilty of blatant mistranslation in Surah Al-Sharh:

> "And we raised from you your sin" (Verse 2)
> "And we raised for you your memory." (Verse 4)

"So when/if you finished/ended/completed, so work hard/fatigue." (Verse 7)

Such a reckless rendering depicts the illustrious Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in very poor, even repulsive light.

It is beyond logic why they have included in Bibliography the Jewish translator of the Quran, N. J. Dawood; the Orientalist, J.M. Rodwell; the apostate, Rashad Khalifa; the Shia, M.H. Shakir; and the Qadyani, Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad (p.482), Is it their only aim to misguide readers under the pretext of presenting to them a so-called English translation of the Quran?

Details of the First edition:

M. J. and S. Ahmed, Vancouver, Canada, 1994. pp. 482.

30
Fakhry, Majid
The Quran: A Modern English Version
(1996)

Majid Fakhury's work, being the latest addition to the fairly rich and ever-growing body of English translations of the Quran, lays the following claims for itself: 'as faithful as English rendering of the Arabic text as possible'; 'to correct the errors or lapses of earlier translators,' and 'to express the message [of the Quran] in a simple, readable English idiom' (p.3).

Fakhry, however, does not deliver in full what he promises. What is all the more intriguing and irksome is that notwithstanding his deep and wide familiarity with Islam and its traditions, as embodied in his impressive scholarly writings such as A History of Islamic Philosophy and Ethical Theories in Islam, Fakhry betrays utter disregard for Muslim sensitivities and sanctities in his choice of such obnoxious terms as 'Apostle' and 'Shrine' (p.1) for the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and Ka 'bah respectively. Nevertheless, it must be said to his credit that his synoptic account of the Prophet, the Quran and early Islamic history (pp.1-3) is singularly free from the diatribe and distortion which vitiate Orientalists' pieces on these subjects.

It is, however, hard to take this English version of the Quran as a 'faithful rendering of the Quranic text' in the face of the following instances of unpardonable omissions:

(1) The whole verse of al- Shu'ra 26: 183 has been left untranslated;

(2) Parts of the following verses have not been translated either:

al- Nahl 16: 59,	*ma fi al- samawat*
	(Whatever is in the heavens)
al- Nahl 16: 121	*Ijtabahu*
	(He chose him [Abraham])

al- Isra 17: 28	*Tarjuha* (Which you hope)
Sad 38: 13	*wa qawmu lut* (and the people of Lot)

Most of the brief notes in the work serve, at best, as parenthetical words which fill the gaps in the Quranic narrative. Fakhry shies away from placing Surahs into their historical/ circumstantial context. Nor does he explain the Quranic allusions to names, places and events. In the absence of such vital background information an uninitiated, particularly a non- Muslim students of the Quran is not likely to benefit much from Fakhry's work.

In a sense, however, the absence of explanatory notes is a blessing. For in the very few instances where such notes appear, these actually tend to spawn 'the errors or lapses of earlier translators,' of course, of the Orientalist variety. On the Quranic provision for polygamy, Fakhry offers the following bizarre explanation '…this verse was revealed following the Battle of Uhud in which seventy Muslim fighters were killed leaving many widows and other dependants without a provider for them. Hence most commentators regard the permission as an exception and not a rule' (p.51). So is another misleading assertion by Fakhry, 'They (the Abbreviated Letters) often mark the beginning of one Surah and the end of another' (p.6). Of the total 114 Quranic Surahs, only 29 open with the Abbreviated Letters and not a single one ends with these. Into the same category falls Fakhry's reference to the 'sacrifice of Isaac' (pp.282-3 and 437). The consensus among Muslims is that the Quranic allusion here is to the Prophet Ishmael (peace and blessings be upon him).

Fakhry's claim, as the sub-title of the work indicates of presenting 'a modern English version' of the Quran 'in a simple, readable English idiom' is belied by his preferences for several such largely incomprehensible, unusual, and at times, quaint words as 'benefaction' (p. 428), 'importuned' (p.398) 'ruination,' 'exhalation,' 'bewitched' (p.222), 'raiment,' (p. 224), 'the Day of the Parasol' (p. 233), 'glen' (p.234), 'ensconced' (p.237), and 'professed

disputant' (p.162). In places, Fakhry's rendering, far from helping readers, might badly confuse them about the meaning and message of the Quran. For one can hardly make much of such renderings by Fakhry:

> But as for him whose scales are light, his mother shall be the Pit (101: 9, p. 422).
>
> He who does the righteous deed returns to Allah unhampered (25: 71, p.226).
>
> Their necks will stay subjugated thereto (26: 4, p.227).

The work is further marred by a number of typographical errors for example, on pp. 3, 60, 231, 341,444 and 446. One hardly expected a somewhat slip- shod work as this by a scholar of the caliber of Majid Fakhry.

Publication details of the first edition:

Reading, UK, Garnet, 1997, 457 pages, ISBN: 1-85964-0869

Number of Editions: 4

31
Malik, Muhammad Farooq-i-Azam
Al-Quran: The Guidance for Mankind
(1997)

Muhammad Farooq-i-Azam Malik (b.1943), an Islamic activist of Pakistani origin, spent his life as a management professional in the USA. He was instrumental in establishing the dynamic Islamic organization, Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA). The work under study has grown out of his Quran lectures at study circles. The subtitle of his work underscores the thrust of his approach: to bring out the eternal guidance of the Quran for readers. His "Foreword" presses home the same point that instead of attempting at a literal translation, he has tried to articulate the meaning and message of the Quran against the backdrop of Prophet Muhammad's glorious life and career and the seventh century Arabia milieu in which the Quran was revealed piecemeal which came out first in 1999.

Malik is too overcautious is translating some of the key, recurrent Quranic terms such as *salah, rabb, rasul, al-lawh al-mahfuz, qadr, mushrikin al-hawiyah, sijeen, illiyeen, tasneem,* and *al-hotama*. A translation, by its definition, explains the terms and concepts in the target language. If it retains the original vocabulary, it defeats its very purpose. The other defaulter on this count is the husband-wife Quran translator team of Abdal Al-Haqq Bewley and Aisha Bewley who have retained scores of Quranic expressions in their English rendering.

Malik has sought to compensate the above shortcoming by annexing a fairly comprehensive Glossary (pp.95-102). His elucidation is, on the whole, accurate. However, the following entries stand in need of revision: a) No reference is made to Ansar, Prophet Isa's disciples and the definition is confined only to Ansar of Madina (p.95). b) While discussing Firaun, his era and his link

with Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) should have been specified, for the benefit of readers (p.95). c) Under the entry on Jinn, Iblis/Shaitan should have been mentioned, as declared in verse 50 of Al-Kahf. (pp. 96-97). d) "Yome" (p.102) should be better transliterated as *yawm* (aeon of time in the divine reckoning).

Malik's venture has two outstanding features. Though it is devoid of annotations, it prepares readers well for grasping the import of Quranic Surahs. Prefaced to each Surah is an extensive introduction, providing authentic, valuable information about its period of revelation, major issues, divine laws and guidance embodied in it. For example, the prefatory note on Surah Ali Imran relates in brief the account of the battle of Badr, the Christians of Najran and the battle of Uhud (pp.158-159). Likewise, the introductory note on Surah Yusuf brings out its thematic relevance with Sirah (pp.340-341). Before reading Surah Al-Ahzab, readers are familiarized with its circumstantial setting, a thorough analysis of the battle of Al-Ahzab, the raid carried out against the Jewish tribe of Bani Quraizah, social reforms set in motion by this Surah such as Shariah guidelines about adoption, marriage and divorce, law of inheritance, drinking, gambling, socio-economic life, particularly *hijab* (pp.549-556). Readers are informed about the themes of monotheism and the Hereafter in the note on Surah Al-Ghashiyah (pp.841). Besides, an overview of the main contents of the Quran appears at the outset of the work (pp.39-93).

The other gem of this work consists in its elaborate Subject Index (pp.906-953). Few English translations are so helpful as Malik's in looking for a very wide range of themes, issues and concepts taken up in the Quran, which are neatly classified under easy-to-locate subject headings and their detailed subsections.

It is a great pity that notwithstanding Malik's decades long residence in the USA, he does not display command over English. Scores of errors related to English grammar, syntax and usage have crept into his work. Some instances are on pp.158, 645, 646, 647, and 962.

Malik's work has thus its strengths and weaknesses. It is a right step towards advancing readers' knowledge about the infinite divine guidance which is relevant for all time and place, though this work needs improvement in presentation.

Details of the first edition:

The Institute of Islamic Knowledge, Houston, USA, 1997, pp.964.
ISBN: 0-911119-80-9

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Bewley, Abdalhaqq and Bewley, Aisha
The Noble Quran: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English
(1999)

This new English translation by a husband and wife team from Norwich, UK. Aisha Bewley (b. 1948), born of Christian parents in the US, converted to Islam in 1968. She has translated several Islamic texts into English.

As to its conception, in their Preface (pp. iii-iv) the translators, no doubt, mention some factors which prompted them to embark upon yet another new English translation of the Qur'an. First, we are told that they undertook this project at the suggestion of their guide and teacher, Shaikh 'Abdalqadir Sufi. This bland statement, however, leaves the above important questions unanswered. Rather, these are not even addressed. Did the Shaikh realize the need for a new English translation? If so, what made him think so? More interestingly, there is no clue about the identity, accomplishments and credentials of this Shaikh. Next we are told, though again very curtly, that the existing English translations are 'inadequate.' The Bewleys, nonetheless, pass in silence over various mind-sets and perspectives of different translators, which have caused much confusion in the field. Bewleyes' only complaint: 'When we read the existing translations, however, although the meaning came across, the language always seemed to get in its way' (p. iii). In other words, the existing translations are not in lucid or fluent English. One, therefore, naturally expects that the present venture would mark a significant improvement, at least, in this respect. For this is exactly what impelled the authors to undertake this new translation. One is, however, greatly disappointed to note what this work delivers. The authors employ several awkward, unfamiliar expressions, some of which are listed below, that 'get in the way'

of grasping the meaning and message of the Qur'an. One learns also from the Preface: 'perhaps the main objective in presenting this new rendering; to allow the meaning of the original, as far as possible, to come straight through with as little linguistic interface as possible so that the English used does not get in the way of the direct transmission of the meaning' (p. iii). It is hard to think of any plausible reason as to why the translators are unsure about their main objective, which is qualified by 'perhaps.' Furthermore, how can the meaning possibly 'come straight through' with minimum 'linguistic interface?' This question becomes all the more perplexing since the present work is bereft of any annotation, which could, otherwise, facilitate the understanding of the readers. So the claim for capturing or conveying 'the direct transmission of the meaning' in a translated work, it is at odds with both the theory and craft of translation. In sum, at the level of its conception, this new translation is marked by many gaps and incongruities.

Mention must be made of the following two important gaps that the work is without the Quranic text. It is an unpardonable omission, especially when this work is published by Muslims. Moreover, the work contains only translation, to the exclusion of explanatory notes on the circumstantial setting, narratives, allusions, historical and geographical background information, important personalities and key terms and concepts of the Qur'an. In the absence of this vital material, the translation under review hardly affords an opportunity to the readers to gain or enhance their understanding of the Qur'an. This gap is all the more striking in view of the translators' assertion that they had been working on this project for twenty-five years and their pious wish 'that this new rendering will give people of his time, a more direct access to the meaning of the Book of Allah,' (p. vi). At the level of execution, this new translation suffers from many incongruities, of which at least the following pmes deserve mention:

1. It goes without saying that a translation aims at conveying to the readers the meaning of the original with the help of most suitable and faithful equivalent expressions in the target

language. Every language has certain expressions which are almost untranslatable. Yet a competent translator's job consists in fathoming the essence and purport of such expressions and in representing the same in his translation. However, even these rudimentary points of both the theory and art of translation are neglected in this work. For numerous Quranic/Arabic expressions abound *ad verbatim* in their translation. If the target readers are expected to possess deep, varied knowledge of the original, there is hardly any need for producing for them a translation. Rather, they would and should study a work in the original. What forces me to state these commonplaces is that, to one's utter bewilderment, one come across passage after passage in this English translation in which untranslated Quranic/Arabic expressions appear profusely and recurrently, and without any explanatory footnote. For example:

i. In Surah al-Ahzab (pp. 402-11) as many as twenty Quranic/Arabic expressions have been retained in the original. Some of these untranslated words are: *taqwa, kafirun, kufr, dunya, munafiqun, muhajirun, sadiqun, iman, sadaqa, idda, halal and mushrikun.* Illustrative of the same are following passages:

   It is guidance and good news for the *muminun*, those who establish *salat* and pay *zakat* and are certain about the *akhira.* (al-Naml 27: 2-3, p. 360)

   Glory be to you! I make tawba to You. (al-A'raf 7: 143, p. 151)

2. While the translators must be commended for adhering in principle to keeping close to the original, their predilection on this count, at times, seems to border on obsession, as a result of which literalism has crept, in places, into their work, rendering the clouding or even loss of meaning. This lacuna tends to be all the more glaring in view of the translators' above stated claim for 'having allowed the meaning of the original to come straight through.' The following are instances in point:

i. But as for those who have *iman* ... will remain in them [the Gardens] timelessly, for ever and ever (al-Nisa 4:121, p. 85).

ii. All that inhabits the night and the day belongs to Him... the Bringer into Being of the heavens and the earth (al-An'am 6: 14, 15, p. 114).

iii. It is merely that your lower selves have suggested something... (Yusuf 12: 18, p. 219).

iv. It may well be that I will fall for them and so become a man of ignorance (Yusuf 12: 33, pp. 221).

v. A people who clearly have no *iman* in Allah and are kuffar about the world to come (Yusuf 12: 37, p. 221).

vi. He came out to his people from the Upper room... then We sent Our *ruh* to her (Maryam 19:10 and 16, p. 287).

vii. He directed me to do *salat*.. (Maryam 19: 30, p. 288).

viii. They are a people of deviators (al-Naml 27: 12, p. 361).

ix. Did I not make a contract with you, tribe of Adam ... We return them to their primal state (Ya Sin 36: 59 and 67, p. 429).

x. Bearing him caused his mother great debility (Luqman 31:13, p. 397)

3. It is somewhat intriguing that despite being native speakers of English, the translators have occasionally failed to use consistently standard language in their translation. Many contractions such as 'don't' (pp. 218 and 221), 'It's' (p. 220), 'It's him' (p. 221), 'He's fired' (p. 221), 'you're' (p. 221) appear in the work. Their use in a formal piece of writing strikes a jarring note. In the same vein is their preference, at places, for highly uncommon and somewhat incomprehensible words such as 'variegated' (p. 281), 'in your tread' (p. 396), 'eternal timelessness' (p. 399), 'gardens of Safe Refuge' (p. 400), 'grasping for wealth' (p. 404), 'begrudging' (p. 404),

‘obstructers’ (p. 400), ‘trodden on’ (p. 405), ‘call down blessings’ (p. 409), ‘clear-cut enemy’ (p. 218), ‘to do salat’ (p. 288) and ‘scuppered’ (p. 282). As a result, the level of the translation has become uneven.

The translators have made a feeble attempt to compensate for the absence of footnotes with a slim Glossary of Terms (pp. 644-7) and an equally short Glossary of Proper Names. Both Glossaries leave much to be desired. The term *Ansar* is defined only in relation to the Madinan Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) while nothing is said about the Quranic use of this appellation for the disciples of Prophet Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him), as in 3:52 and 61:14. *Din* is explained as ‘life-translation,’ with an equally unhelpful and vague comment that ‘every society and cultural grouping have a *deen* which they follow’ (p. 644). *Dunya* is elucidated in metaphysical terms of reference: ‘not as a cosmic phenomenon, but as experienced’ (p. 644). In dealing with the Messengers in the Glossary of Proper Names only their Biblical names are listed, without any attempt to bring into relief their era, their message and mission, and their link to the chain which culminated in the advent of the final Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).

It is a pity that this latest addition to the field of English translations of the Qur’an has not much to recommend itself to the English-speaking readers who still need a faithful translation, accompanied by the Quranic text, supplemented with helpful explanatory notes and in chaste English. It lacks a singular distinctive feature to be described as an improvement upon the existing translations.

Publication details of the first edition:

Norwich, UK, Bookwork, 1999, 651 pages, ISBN: 1-874216-36-3.

Number of Editions: 1

Bewley, Abdalhaqq and Aisha
The Noble Quran: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English
(2011)

Born in 1948 in the USA in a Christian family, after self study Aisha Bewley embraced Islam. She holds MA in Near Eastern Languages from the University of California. Most of her books are on Sufi Islam Hadith, Islamic history and a joint translation of Imam Malik's *Muwatta*.

Although claimed as a 'Revised Edition,' the book under review is merely a reprint of the first edition which had appeared in 1999 with even an identical number of 651 pages. This translation has been carried out by a husband and wife team, both converts to Islam. Of the two, Aisha Bewley, (b.1948) born of Christian parents in the US embraced Islam in 1968 and is acclaimed for her English translations of several Islamic texts. The Bewleys embarked on this Quran translation at the behest of their spiritual mentor, Shaykh Abdulqadir al-Murabit. It is a pity that in their Preface (pp. iii-vi) the Bewleys say nothing about the scores of the existing English translations. Nor do they spell out the rationale behind their decision to embark on this ambitious undertaking.

Notwithstanding the Bewleys' pious intention, there are few merits in this translation which may justify its publication. First, it provides no background information about either the Quran, its Surahs, its geo-historical and cultural allusions or its many literary, stylistic and rhetorical hallmarks. There are no explanatory notes which may help readers gain a better idea of the meaning and message of the Quran. In the absence of notes, English speaking readers who are new to the Quran cannot derive much help and guidance from it.

Furthermore, both the editions of this translation have been brought out without the original Quranic text in Arabic. A major flaw in this work is the intrusion of many Quranic/Arabic expressions *verbatim*, without any translation or elucidation. If the English speaking readers are expected to possess such deep, specialized knowledge of the original Arabic, what is the need for producing for them an English translation? In the first edition of this work as many as 20 Quranic/Arabic expressions had featured in Surah al-Ahzab. The Bewleys appear to have realized this oddity and,

accordingly, deleted the reference to this incongruous feature from their Preface. However, even this revision has not been consistently carried out throughout the new edition, as illustrated by the following: (i) 'Have *taqwa* of your Lord.' (al-Zumar 39:10 and 20, pp. 446 and 447); (ii) '... making my *deen* sincerely His.' (al-Zumar 39:11, p. 447); (iii) 'He sends the *Ruh* by His command.' (Ghafir 40: 15, p. 455).

Although the Bewleys are native speakers of English, their predilection for a strictly literal and even unidiomatic rendering of the Quran in English is inexplicable. The following instances of their translation are vitiated by a befogging or even loss of meaning:

(1) Allah is Rich beyond Need of any of you. (al-Zumar 39: 7, p. 446).

(2) Slaves of Mine. (al-Zumar 39: 10, p. 446).

(3) When Allah is mentioned on His own, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Next World shrink back shuddering. (al-Zumar 39: 45, p. 450).

(4) So be straight with Him. (Fussilat 41: 6, p. 463).

(5) Men and women of the believers, hypocrites and idolaters. (al-Fath 48:5 and 6, p. 500).

(6) Who can control Allah for you. (al-Fath 48: 11, p. 501).

(7) That is how the Emergence will take place. (Qaf 50: 11, p. 509).

(8) Do not put yourselves forward in front of Allah. (al-Hujurat 49: 1, p. 505).

(9) You are not a dictator over him. (Qaf 50: 45, p. 511).

(10) Averted from it is he who is averted. (al-Dhariyat 51: 9, p. 512).

Appended to the work are two slim glossaries of Quranic terms (pp. 644-647) and proper names in the Quran (pp. 648-651) which do not advance much the understanding of the readers. In sum, this Revised Edition faithfully retains almost all the major flaws of the original edition.

Publication details of the first edition:

London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 2011. Revised Edition. Pp. 651.
ISBN: 9871842001288.

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Emerick, Yahiya
The Meaning of the Holy Quran in Today's English
(2000)

Yahiya Emerick, an American scholar who embraced Islam in 1989 has served the cause of Islam admirably with his extensive writings on the Quran, Sirah and several facets of Islam. He holds the enviable distinction of having produced two English translations of the Quran: one for general readers and the other for the young. The translation of the Quranic text is almost identical in both, though the two works stand apart from each other in presentation strategies, and quantum of annotations and appendixes.

In both the works he has grouped several Surahs under a common title. Though intended as a reader-friendly device, some of these titles are incomprehensible or misnomers. Take the following as illustrative: i) "The Family of Seven Ha Meems." Readers are not likely to follow as to what it means. ii) "The Beautiful Poems" (Surahs 67-94) and "The Rhythmic Chapters (95-112)." This is not factually true. For the Quran abounds in *saja.'* This feature is not special to only the above mentioned Surahs.

In his Preface he claims to have captured "the melodic and dramatic quality of the original (p.8)" His rendering of *khalifa* as "caretaker" (p.49), *turjun* as "you're going to go back" (p.49), *astawa* as "He projected Himself" (p.49) *al-haq* as "the honest truth" (p.71) and "*takfurun*" as "don't suppress (the faith that dwells within your heart)" (p.71) do not, however, tend to justify the above tall claim. His other claim of being faithful to the Quranic text in his annotations (p.8) is, however, valid. He has drawn painstakingly on tafsir-related Ahadith and authentic classical and modern tafasir, particularly Mufti Shafi's *Maarif Al-Quran* in explicating things Quranic. Emerick's copious notes, like a treasure house of valuable

information, facilitate readers' understanding of the eternal Quranic guidance. Although he has tried to justify his irksome use of contractions in his English translation (p.9), it cannot be condoned in such a grand and noble academic venture as the translation of the Word of Allah. He does well in his introduction to point out "the erroneous representations of the Quran in English" by Orientalists. (p.11). However, he is widely off the mark in commending the Jew translator, N. J. Dawood (1956), of which the introduction is vitiated with vituperative remarks against Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Equally flawed is his reference to "Mohammad Khan's popular" translation (p.11). First, his name is Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan. Far from being popular, his is an obscure work, of which only one edition came out in 1905 from Karnal, a small town in India. Worse, his translation has unmistakable Qadyani leanings. Later, he recanted his Qadyani affiliation. (For a detailed analysis of Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan's Qadyani stance see my article, Abdur Raheem Kidwai. "Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan's *The Holy Quran* (1905): The First Muslim or the First Qadyani English Translation?," *Insights*, Islamabad, Pakistan, 2:1, 2009, 57-75).

While elucidating Verse 189 of Surah Al-Baqarah on the harms of drinking out weighting some of its nominal benefits, Emerick discerningly and instructively cites St. Paul's decree: "Christians should prefer drinking wine instead of water because wine can be good for the health." (1 Timothy 5:23). (p.85) Verse 9 of Al-Qariah declares that a sinner's abode will be the pit of Hell. However, he translates it rather awkwardly thus: "The abyss will be like a mother to him." (p.767). His description of the miraculous destruction of the Abyssinian governor, Abraha's army invading Kabah plays down the role of birds that had rained stones on them. He attributes their rout to plague. (p.771) Muhammad Asad and some other apologetic translators have adopted the same pseudo-rationalistic stance. His vindication of the Islamic *halal* slaughter practice is, nonetheless, stout, exposing the inhumane methods followed in modern slaughterhouses (p.774).

Emerick's work stands out above those of his contemporaries in delving into some of the current issues, as he earnestly seeks to relate the eternal Quranic guidance to some of the challenges thrown up by modernity. The freshness of his perspective is laudable, conspicuous by its absence in M.A.S. Abdel Haleem's Quran translation brought out by the Oxford University Press in 2004. Emerick touches upon the following issues which confront Muslims today: ecological balance (Al-Araf 7:56), childcare (Al-Baqarah 2:233), class conflict (Al-Anam 6:165 and Al-Nisa 4:32), courteous manners (Al-Nisa 4:86), Diversity (Al-Rum 30:22) domestic disharmony (Al-Nisa 4:35), Interfaith dialogue (Ali Imran 3:61), diversity in languages (Al-Rum 30:22), marriage counseling (Al-Nisa 4:36), peace with one's enemies (Al-Baqarah 2:192) racism (Al-Araf 7:12) sectarianism (Al-Anam 6:159), and travel to learn from the past (Ali Imran 3:137-138).

It is a pity that his work is somewhat slipshod on certain counts: a) absence of the honorific formula (peace be upon him) for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) b) spelling errors: New Delhi, Ibn Ishaq, James Kritzeck, Mecca in place of Makkah and dowry instead of dower etc. c) The appendix on Companions (pp.799-803) leaves out the Prophet's beloved wives, Khadijah (RA) and Aishah (RA). The entries on Caliph Umar and Uthman are too brief whereas those Abdullah ibn Salam, Abu Al-As and Barakah are disproportionately too extensive. d) The appendix "Rogue's gallery" enumerating the enemies of Allah and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) retains the name of Abu Sufyan (p.804), though he had accepted Islam on the eve of the conquest of Makkah. Emerick fails to include the recalcitrant wives of Prophets Nuh and Lut, referred to in Al-Tahreem 66:10 among those who have been disobedient to Allah.

On the whole, however, Emerick succeeds largely in conveying effectively and energetically the meaning and message of the Quran to today's readers, for which he deserves accolades.

Details of the first edition:
www.ifna.net/bookstore.htm. Pp.826 ISBN: 9781450 5495 30

34
Translation Committee
The Majestic Quran
(2000)

The appearance of a new English translation of the Qur'an raises great expectations. For, notwithstanding the presence of around sixty complete English translations of the Qur'an, most of which have been rendered by Muslim scholars since 1980s, there is not a single translation which may be recommended with any degree of confidence that it would enhance the readers' understanding of the meaning and message of the Qur'an. There are some which, notwithstanding their sound contents, are marred by a pitiable low style and the use of an awkward, unwieldy idiom. Some are vitiated by unpardonable mistakes in translation, the omission of relevant material or the interpolation of personal or sectarian bias. These are not, however, altogether devoid of some limited merit.

Regrettably the present translation is, however, without any redeeming feature. Rather, it stands out above the others only in being a highly deplorable instance of passing off an earlier published English translation as a new work under a changed title. To put the record straight, *The Holy Qur'an with English Translation* came out in 1992 with Ali Ozek, Nureddin Uzunogly, Tavfik Topuzoglu and Mehmet Maksutoglu, faculty members of Turkish universities, cited as the "staff of translation." This translation was brought out by Ilmi Nesriyat, Istanbul, Turkey and was reprinted four times by the same publisher, with the latest edition re-issued in 2000. Almost the same work has now re-appeared bearing a new title. The same four translators constitute the Translation Committee of the present work. What is scandalous is that even the Translator's Preface, Introduction and Index have been reproduced literally from the earlier version. Worse, the translators make no reference to their earlier foray in the field. The suppression of this important fact raises some disturbing questions.

Was this fact concealed from the new set of publishers - the Nawawi Foundation, USA and the Ibn Khaldun Foundation, UK? For the Publisher's Preface (p. vii) projects the work, ironically enough as a special translation, of which the need was acutely realized by them even in the face of many existing English translations.

Besides this bluffing, another equally serious defect of the translation under review is its heavy and unacknowledged reliance on earlier English translations of Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (published first in 1930) and Abdullah Yusuf Ali (published first between 1934-1937). The borrowings from Abdullah Yusuf Ali are much more pronounced. For even many of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's explanatory notes, with slight editing, have been incorporated without any scruples into the present work. Take the notes on Surah al-Tawbah as illustrative. Of the total thirty notes as many as twenty-three are the ones which have been lifted *verbatim* from Yusuf Ali's work. Same holds true for the notes on Surah al-Hajj: seven out of the nine notes appended to it are copied from Yusuf Ali. The most instructive example is the note 642 (p. 339) in which Yusuf Ali expresses his personal preference for interpreting a particular Quranic expression. The present translators deserve credit only for changing the original "I" to "We."

On the whole, the translation of the Quranic text represents a slight improvement on the material appearing in the Turkish edition. In all probability the new set of Editors are to be complimented for this. Nonetheless, the translation has been taken, in the main, from Pickthall's earlier version, as is illustrated by the following instances of unacknowledged borrowings. The passages in the present translation are followed by Pickthall's original in order to indicate the sweeping extent of (unacknowledged) borrowings.

1. On the day when their own tongues, hands, and feet shall bear witness against them as to what they did. On that day Allah will pay them in full their due, and they shall know that Allah is the manifest Truth. Vile women are for vile men, and vile men for vile women. Good women are for good men, and good men for

good women. Such are innocent of what they say: for them is forgiveness and generous provisions. (al-Nur 24:24-26, p. 352).

On the day when their tongue and their hands and their feet testify against them as to what they used to do. On that day Allah will pay them their just due, and they will know that Allah, He is the Manifest Truth. Vile women are for vile men and vile men are for vile women. Good women are for good men, and good men for good women. Such are innocent of that which people say: for them is pardon and a bountiful provision. (Pickthall's original translation, this and all subsequent references are to his *The Glorious Qur'an*, HM Corporation Ltd., Karachi, Pakistan, n.d. p. 225)

2. [O Prophet], We have indeed given you a manifest victory. That Allah may forgive you of your sin that which is past and that which is to come, and may perfect His favour upon you, and may guide you to a right path. (al-Fath, 48:1-2, p. 511)

   Lo! We have given thee [O Muhammad] a signal victory. That Allah forgive thee of thy sin that which is past and that which is to come, and may perfect His favour unto thee, and may guide thee on a right path. (Pickthall, *ibid*, p. 335).

3. Then woe that day to the denier, who talk of grave matters playfully; the day when they are thrust with a powerful thrust into the fire of Hell. This is the fire which you denied. Is this magic or do you not see? Endure the heat, then whether you are patient or impatient it will be the same for you. You are only being paid for what you used to do. (al-Tur, 52:11-16, pp. 523-524).

   Then woe that day unto the deniers who play in talk of grave matters the day when they are thrust with a (disdainful) thrust into the fire of hell. This is the fire which ye were wont to deny. Is this magic or do ye not see? Endure the heat thereof, and whether ye are patient of it or impatient of it, it is all one for

you. Ye are only being paid for what ye used to do. (Pickthall, *ibid*, p. 345)

4. O believers! Be Allah's helpers. When Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: 'Who will come with me to the help of Allah?" The disciples said: 'We are Allah's helpers.' And a party of the children of Israel believed, while a party disbelieved. Then We strengthened those who believed against their foe, and they became the uppermost. (al-Saff 61:14, p. 552).

   O ye who believe! Be Allah's helpers, even as Jesus son of Mary said unto the disciples: "Who are my helpers for Allah?" They said: 'We are Allah's helpers.' And a party of the children of Israel believed, while a party disbelieved. Then We strengthened those who believed against their foe, and they became the uppermost. (Pickthall, *ibid*., p. 368)

The Index (pp. 606-610), apart from being a copy of the Turkish edition, is defective on many counts. For example, the Prophets Aaron and Adam, the people of Ad and the children of Israel are mentioned many more times in the Quran than listed in the Index. The Prophet's name "Ahmad" appears in al-Saff 61:6, not in al-Muminun 23:6 (p. 606). It is high time that translators and publishers of the Qur'an translations exercise greater caution in bringing out translations, which is essential to helping reader to advance their understanding of its meaning and message. Such unscrupulousness, which mars the translation under review, should be avoided.

Publication details of the first edition:

Burr Ridge, IL, USA and UK: Nawawi Foundation and Ibn Khaldun Foundation, 2000, 610 pages, ISBN: 1929694504.

Number of Editions: 1

35
Ali, Muhammad Mohar
A Word for Word Meaning of the Quran
(2003)

Muhammad Mohar Ali (1929-2007), originally from Bangladesh, who taught for years in Saudi Arabia, admirably served the cause of Islam. Deservedly he was conferred with the prestigious King Faisal award in recognition of his sterling contribution to Islamic studies. His forte lay in repudiating Orientalists on their own turf. His masterly works *The Quran and the Orientalists* and *Sirat Al-Nabi and the Orientalists* stand out for their solid scholarship, and cogent and stout rejoinder to Orientalists' misconceptions and misperceptions against Islam/Quran/Sirah.

His main objective behind authoring this Quran translation is to familiarize English speaking readers, unfamiliar with Arabic, with the Quranic vocabulary, as is evident from the self suggestive title of his work. He states as to what prompted him to embark on this venture and to adopt a new approach in his translation: "The present work… places one or a couple of words of the ayah in one line of column and gives their meaning side by side in another column, taking care to see that the flow and intelligibility of the English meanings is not thereby lost… As is the case with other languages, many words in Arabic language also each bears a number of meanings. An attempt has been made to indicate such different meanings for a particular word." (p.6).

So, at one level it is a literal translation. However, Ali has offset the shortcomings of a bare literal version by providing extensive notes which go a long way in broadening and deepening readers' understanding of the overall message and worldview. For example, in his translation of Surah Al-Fatihah and verses 1-20 of Al-Baqarah he has brilliantly explained an amazingly wide range of Quranic terms, concepts and vocabulary. Here is a select list of

items explicated by him: *Al-Rahman, Al-Raheem, Hamd, Rabb, Alamin, Deen, Ibadah, Istiana, Sirat, Mustaqeem, Niama, Ghazab, Taqwa, Iman, Rizq, Infaq, Akhirah, Yaqeen, Falah, Kufr, Indhar, Qalb, Kidhb, Fasad, Hidaya and Zulm.*

Ali's explication is, however, mostly in grammatical and lexical terms which may be comprehended by only those who already know Arabic. He makes it a point to identify the form of verbs. An instance in point of his definition of the expression *muflihun* used in Verse 5 of Al-Baqarah: "Participle from *alflah*, from IV of *falh*= to split, cleave, plough, hence *fallah*= tiller, peasant. In its form IV, i.e. *aflah*, means to thrive, prosper, be successful." What the Quran intends to convey is somewhat eclipsed by the above jargon laden definition.

However, the translation of the Quranic text is fluent, readily comprehensible to ordinary readers. Take the following passage as illustrative:

> O mankind, worship you Lord Who created you and those before you so that you may save yourselves. [The Lord] Who set for you the earth as a bed and the sky as a structure, and send down from the sky water [rains] and produces there with kinds of corps as provisions for you. So do not set up for Allah equals and you all know. (Al-Baqarah, 2:21-24 pp.26-27)

> And when there came to them a Book from Allah confirming what is with them— and they had previously been praying for victory over those who disbelieve— but when there came to them what they knew, they disbelieved in it. So the curse of Allah is upon the infidels. (Al-Baqarah 2:89 p.57)

Although there is a tremendous difference between the syntax of English and Arabic, Ali has been able to strike an admirable balance between the two in his rendering. His literal translation is followed by his fluent version in idiomatic English. As a result, readers gain knowledge about the Quranic/Arabic vocabulary and grasp also the meaning and message of the Quran. It must be nonetheless added that all the linguistic and lexical features of the Quranic Arabic cannot be reflected in English translation. An

instance in point is usage. The same word has several connotations and in a given context one is preferred to others. This cannot be judiciously observed in a word-by-word translation. Ali has drawn upon a range of classical *tafasir* and lexicon in tackling the difficult issue of Quranic vocabulary. Notwithstanding his competence, Ali has slightly erred in explaining some of the Quranic expressions in Al-Nisa 4:92, and 116, Ta Ha 20:25 and 26, Al-Ahzab 33:48-71, Al-Isra 17:44, Al-Baqarah 2:231 etc.

In sum, it is a masterly work, particularly useful for those who wish to gain acquaintance with Quranic Arabic. Ali deserves accolades for his painstaking rendering and for providing a helpful overview of the circumstantial setting and main themes of very Surah.

For a brilliant critique on the strengths and weaknesses in Ali's work, see the bright Muslim scholar, Zaryab Ahamd Falahi's insightful article in Urdu in *Maarif*, Azamgarh, India, 212:6 (June 2025), 5-15.

Publication of the first edition:

Jamiyat Ihyaa Minhaaj Al-Sunnah, Ipswich, UK, 2003. 3 Vols. ISBN: 954 03 6921.

36
Mohyidin, Basheer Ahmad
Quran: The Living Truth
(2003)

While serving at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Saudi Arabia, which oversees the publication of the Quran, the author was entrusted with assessing the suitability of the earlier English translations of the Quran by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934-1937) and Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1957) for their world-wide distribution. In his words, he adjudged the two thus: "…both the translations were good in their own ways. Yusuf Ali's translation was good for those who understand the English language perfectly well, while Daryabadi's translation was good for those who understand both English and Arabic well." (p.v). This assessment is unhelpful and factually incorrect. Regrettably enough, Mohyidin fails to point out this tendentious aspect of Yusuf Ali's venture: his apologetic, pseudo-rationalism in rejecting miracles and dismissing the Quranic description of perdition on the Last Day, joys of Paradise, divine rewards and punishment, Hellfire, the Throne, Quranic angelogy and eschatology as figurative. Brazenly enough, he denies the physical existence of houris. He misconstrues Satan/Iblis as an angel even in the face of the Quranic assertion that he is a jinn (Al-Kahf 18:50). His mistranslation of some of the Quranic terms has resulted in disastrous consequences. For example, his recklessness in translating such Quranic expressions as *mata*, *hijab* etc misled High Court of Karanataka, Bengaluru, India in Hijab case (2022) and Supreme Court of India in Shah Bano case (1985) in misinterpreting Shariah. His garbled understanding of the Quran stems from his Ismaili faith. Abussalam Al-Hitari, a bright Islamic scholar, has identified Yusuf Ali's serious errors in his approach to the Quran in his brilliant expose, The Underlying Esoteric Ismaili Doctrine in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English Translation of the Quran, "*International Journal of Linguistics and Translation Studies,"* 3(3),

September 2022, 125-145 Mohyidin's silence over these detestable aspects of Yusuf Ali's work is disturbing. In a sharp contrast to Yusuf Ali's, Daryabadi's work is cognate with the consensus views of *Ahl Al-Sunnah wa Al-Jamah*. Moreover, it stands out as a laudable exercise in Comparative Religion and Orientalism, as it vigorously and cogently vindicates the truth of the Islamic worldview. It is a great pity that Daryabadi's valuable work has gone largely unnoticed. Only after 2000 its several abridged editions have come out of the U.K.

Oddly enough, Mohyidin rues the revisions in Yusuf Ali's work whose post-1991 editions are mostly free from his unconventional annotations. It is gratifying to note that as part of his *dawah* venture in West Africa, Mohyidin accomplished a noble task in translating the Quran into as many as three languages of the region: Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo. These must have helped many derive the eternal Quranic guidance. His brief account of the English translations of the Quran by Orientalists (p.x) is reflective of his discerning judgement and his concern for preserving the message of the Quran. However, as in the case of Yusuf Ali, he spares Muhammad Asad's equally objectionable and apologetic translation (1980).

It is, nonetheless, heartening that his own work is remarkably free from the obnoxious interpolations and twisting the import of the Quran. His is a banal work, disfigured, at places by the use of such archaic and obsolete expression as "Thee" (p.5). An irksome aspect of his work is his omission of the Quranic Surah titles in Arabic. Instead, he has employed throughout their English translations which are, at times, beyond recognition. Take the following as illustrative: "The Abundance of Good" for Surah Al-Kawthar; "The Time" for Al-Asr and "The Expansion" for Al-Sharah. His introduction to the Quran (pp. xiii-xviii) teems with commonplaces.

Worse, his knowledge of English language, particularly, syntax and usage is pathetically low. Grammatical and spelling errors vitiate his work throughout, for example, pp. 602, 613, 617, 621, 626, 635, 733, 735 and 744. In his commentary on Surah Al-Fil he records two contradictory statements: Abraha had attacked Makkah "about

thirty years before the birth of the Holy Prophet," and "just before his birth." (p.733) Equally absurd is his claim that Abraha's intention in so doing was "to wipe out Islam" (p.733). Needless to add, Islam did not exist prior to Prophet Muhammad's advent.

Mohyidin has labored to include many annotations. However, these merely paraphrase the contents of verses under study. Occasionally he has inserted some tafsir-Ahadith. His notes do not enlighten readers. In view of his poor presentation skills this work is not likely to benefit readers much.

Publication details of the first edition:
MANAS Foundation, Aluva, Kerala, India. Pp. 745.
www.quran4world.org

37
Haleem, M.A.S. Abdel
The Quran: A New Translation
(2004)

This latest addition to the growing body of English translations of the Quran by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, Professor of Islamic Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, like earlier ventures by other Muslims in the field, has both its strengths and weaknesses. Let us highlight first its valuablė elements.

Prefaced to the translation is an extensive and enlightening overview of things Islamic: articles of faith, history of the revelation, compilation and English translations of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad's exemplary life (pp. ix-xxxvi). This would be of help to those new to Islam and the Quran.

More remarkable is Abdel Haleem's rendering of the Quranic text into refreshingly clear and simple English. Unlike his predecessors, he does not have any fondness for archaic, biblical expressions. Admirably his main concern is to convey the import of the Arabic text in readable English. For achieving this end, he ably fills gaps and offers a coherent and easy-to comprehend rendering. An instance in point is the following translation of verse 54 of Surah al-Isra by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

> It is your Lord that knoweth you best: If He please, He granteth you mercy, or if He please, punishment: We have not sent Thee to be a disposer of their affairs for them.

Contrast this with Abdel Haleem's:

> Your Lord has the most knowledge about all of you: if He pleases, He will have mercy on you, and if He pleases, He will punish you. [Prophet), We did not send you to take charge of them.

However, apart from getting a lucid paraphrasing of the Quranic text, readers approach a work like Abdel Haleem's for gaining an overall understanding of the Quranic worldview, its meaning and message, its guidance for the main departments of human activity and its relevance for them. Abdel Haleem appears to be alive to this need. For, his Introduction commences with this promising note: "The Quran is the supreme authority in Islam... when the Muslim world is dealing with such universal issues as globalization, the environment, combating terrorism and drugs, issue of medical ethics and feminism, evidence to support the various arguments is sought in the Quran." (p. ix). Regrettably, his work does not deliver what the above statement intends to promise. Instead, the work is, at best, a bare translation of the Quranic text, with very brief and occasional notes, and even these are drawn from the twelfth century *tafsir*, Razi's *Mafatih al-Ghayb*. Worse, these notes taken from a dated tafsir explain, at most, some nuances of the Arabic idiom and the finer shades of usage. As Abdel Haleem's work is sadly without the Arabic text and is directed at English speaking readers, discussion of the niceties of Arabic expressions seems out of place. His elucidation of Surah al-Fatihah is illustrative. The notes only explain the translator's preferred linguistic rendering of the Quranic tems *rahman, rahim*. "The Arabic root *r-b-b*, and *al-alamin*" (p. 3). But without the integration of the Arabic original in the text, it appears to be a pointless exercise to analyze the grammatical forms of these expressions. Readers equipped with the proficiency to appreciate discussion of the 'intensive form' and 'root' would be better off studying some standard *tafasir* in Arabic. The needs of target readers of this work would have been served better, if the translator had brought into sharper relief the meaning and message of this opening and highly important Surah in terms of how it defines man's relationship with God, the articles of Islamic faith, the connection of this Surah with the rest of the Quran and its significance and role as supplication *par excellence*.

Even when Abdel Haleem makes a faint attempt to grapple with some important issue, his cryptic notes do not elucidate the meaning. For example, he translates the last verse of Surah al-

Fatihah thus: 'Guide us to the straight path: the path of those You have blessed, *those who incur no anger* ...' (italics mine)

It is followed by this extremely brief and bewildering comment: 'Note that the verb here is not attributed to God.' (p. 3) With reference to the Arabic grammar it may be a valid statement. However, this comment raises more questions than it answers. If it is not God's, then whose 'anger' is it then? Does the Quranic 'Straight Path' consist in not incurring anyone's anger? Did the Prophet and the Companions achieve this distinction, and how?

It is equally distressing to find that in places Abdel Haleem's observations seem somewhat tendentious. Swayed by the current notion of absolute gender equality in the West, he faces the dilemma of reconciling this fallacious notion with the thrust of verse 282 of Surah Al-Baqarah, directing that debt be recorded in writing, with two men as witnesses. If two men are not there, the Quran instructs, one man and two women may be called as witnesses. For Abdel Haleem, however, this Quranic directive is applicable only to 'a cultural environment where women generally were less involved in money matters and calculations than men, less literate.' Then, going a step further, on the authority of some unnamed 'modern interpreters' he audaciously pronounces his judgement: ' the cultural context is different now.' (p. xxvi). In other words, it amounts to treating the Quran as a dated work, with its impractical, cumbersome baggage, born of its narrow cultural environment and specific cultural context.

It is a pity that the translator has not undertaken any sustained effort to identify Quranic allusions and references. As a result, the work fails to advance readers' understanding of the Quran. For example, Iblis/Satan is defined merely as 'the enemy of mankind and *vice-versa'* (p. 7), Sabians as 'a monotheistic religious community,' (p. 9), *dhikr* as 'renown or reminder' (p. 318) and *zakah* as 'taxes on Muslims' (p. 118). While key Quranic terms and concepts are left unexplained, the translator indulges in recording some inane observations. One of the miracles granted by Allah to the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was that he spoke in the cradle (verse 46

of Ali Imran). Far from discussing this miracle, he informs: 'the word "mahd" means a place smoothed out for a small child to sleep in. It is not a piece of furniture like a cradle.' (p. 38). Likewise, he renders the Quranic expression *sawat* (verse 20 of al-Araf) as 'nakedness,' followed by this banal comment: 'Conventionally translated as 'private parts,' but the Arabic does not necessarily have this meaning.' (p. 95). Needless to add, there is a very thin line of demarcation between 'private parts' and 'nakedness' and between a 'cradle' and 'a place smoothed out for a small child to sleep in.' Had he been more imaginative and careful, his notes would have enhanced further the usefulness of this work.

Some other irksome features of the work are: an erratic and inconsistent transliteration system; several typographical errors, for example, 'Yusuf' and 'Shayan' (p. 462) for Yusuf and Shaytan respectively, and the use of such uncommon words as 'absolution' and 'advocation' (p. 459). Worse is the omission of page numbers on the last twenty-five pages of the work. Such a user unfriendly device is highly surprising from a reputed publisher like the Oxford University Press.

On the whole it is valuable translation in modern, easy-to-understand English, although unfortunately the few notes appended to it do not lead to a better appreciation of the eternal message of the Quran.

Publication details of the first edition:

Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, 464 pages, ISBN: 0192805487

Number of Editions: 1

38
Ahamed, Syed Vickar
English Translation of the Meaning of the Quran
(2005)

Regrettably the present translation is yet another blatant instance of plagiarism in the noble field of Quranic studies. The translator has drawn very heavily upon Abdullah Yusuf Ali's highly popular and widely acclaimed English translation of 1934-37. The present work does not carry any prefatory note by the so-called translator, which might have shed some light on the considerations behind his embarking upon this venture. Nor is any other information about his academic credentials. The work does not have any explanatory notes which could provide some pointers to his mindset or his perspective on the Quran.

Instead, it contains Foreword by one Sh. A. R. Khan, abounding in banal commonplaces. The Preface is by the well-known Islamic activist, Zakir Nayak. It is somewhat populist, rhetoric laden piece, highlighting the "Scientific Facts Mentioned in the Quran" (pp. xvii - xxiv) and even seeking to prove why Swami Rajneesh should not be deemed as God! (p. xvi)

Ahamed's is not the first instance of the deplorable practice of plagiarism in the field; the earlier ones are: 1. *The Holy Quran with English Translation*, by Ali Ozek et al. Istanbul, Turkey, Ilmi Nesriyat, 1992, which is derived largely from Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of 1930. 2. Translation of the Glorious Quran by Ahmad Zidan and Dina Zidan. London, Ahmad Zidan 1991, which is based mostly on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's work.

The following passages from the work under review and Yusuf Ali's earlier work underscore the range and nature of the former's scant regard for intellectual property rights:

And (remember) when the angels said: “O Maryam (Mary)! Allah has chosen you and purified you - Chosen you above the women of all nations.

O Maryam (Mary)! Pray to your Lord sincerely: And prostrate yourself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down.” Ahamed (pp. 30-31)

Behold! The angels said: “O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee- chosen thee above the women of all nations.

O Mary! Worship the Lord devoutly: prostrate thyself and bow down in prayer with those who bow down.” Abdullah Yusuf Ali (p. 153) (Ali-Imran 3: 42-43)

Do they not see that they are tried every year once or twice? Yet they do not turn in repentance, and they do not pay attention (to what they do).

And whenever a Surah (or Chapter in the Quran) comes down they (the hypocrites) see each other, (saying), “Does anyone see you?” (And) then turn away: Allah has turned their hearts (away from Light) because they are a people who do not understand. Ahamed (p. 114)

See they not that they are tried every year once or twice? Yet they turn not in repentance, and they take no heed.

Whenever there comes down a Surah, they look at each other, (saying), “Does anyone see you?” then they turn away: Allah turned their hearts (from the Light): for they are a people that understand not. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (pp. 542-543); (al-Tawbah 9: 126-127)

(O Prophet!) say: “Allah knows best how long they stayed: with Him is (the knowledge of) the secrets of the heavens and of the earth: How clearly He sees, how finely He hears! They have no protector other than Him and He does not share His command and His rule with anyone (whomsoever)” Ahamed (p. 168)

Say: Allah knows best how long they stayed: with Him is (the knowledge of) the secrets of the heavens and the earth: How clearly He sees, how finely He hears (everything)! They have no protector other than Him: nor does He share His command with

any person whatsoever. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (pp. 826-827); (Al-Kahf 18: 26)

And if We so wanted, surely We could have brought every soul its true guidance: But the Word from Me will come true, "I will fill hell with jinns and mankind altogether. Then you taste (the penalty) because you forgot the Meeting of yours on this Day, surely, We too will forget you you taste the penalty of eternity for your (evil) actions! Ahamed (p. 244)

If We had so willed, We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance: But the Word from Me will come true, "I will fill hell with jinns and men altogether. Taste you then - for you forgot the Meeting of this Day of yours and We too will forget you taste you the chastisement of eternity for your (evil) deeds! Abdullah Yusuf Ali (p. 1229); (al-Sajdah 32: 13-14)

By the Glorious Morning Light, and by the night when it is still, your Guardian-Lord has not forsaken you. (O Prophet!) Nor is He displeased. Ahamed (p. 371)

By the Glorious Morning Light, and by the night when it is still, thy Guardian - Lord hath not forsaken thee. (O Prophet!) Nor is He displeased. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (p. 1969) (Al-Duha 93: 1-3)

Worse, notwithstanding such glaring plagiarism the present work bears the "Translation Approval" from al-Azhar. It is high time al-Azhar should introduce rigorous scrutiny in its procedure of granting approval. More important, of course, it is that persons like Ahamed should think twice before passing off someone's work as his own in a such pious and noble field as the Quran scholarship.

Publication details of the first edition:

Lombard, IL, USA, Book of Signs Foundation, 2005, 396 pages, ISBN: 9780977300907

Number of Editions: 1

39
Usmani, Mufti Muhammad Taqi
The Meaning of the Noble Quran with Explanatory Notes
(2005)

This English translation has its genesis intertwined with the translator's illustrious father and Quranic scholar, Mufti Muhamamd Shafi's (1897-1976) substantial and brilliant Urdu tafsir, *Maarif Al-Quran,* (1993). As the translator, Mufti Muhammd Taqi Usmani (b.1943) and his team embarked upon the English version of *Maarif Al-Quran*, they deemed it appropriate to produce a new work "with brief explanatory notes." (p.v) So the English translation is the same which appears in the English version of *Maarif Al-Quran*. However, since *Maarif Al-Quran* is a voluminous *tafsir* running into 8 large volumes, with a detailed commentary on things Quranic, Usmani has introduced brief annotations and hence this work came out. Another significant background pointer to both *Maarif Al-Quran* and Usmani's present work is that both of these replicate their mentor, the towering Deobandi Islamic scholar of the Indo-Pak subcontinent, Ashraf Ali Thanwi (1863-1943), especially his highly popular and influential Urdu tafsir, *Bayan Al-Quran* which had appeared in 1908. Taqi Usmani has compiled Thanwi's articles, *Maqalati Hakeem Al-Ummat* in 34 volumes. So the work under review is truly a representative of Deobandi school headed by Thanwi. Other English translations of this school are: i) Mahmoodul Hasan and Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, *The Noble Quran* (1991), ii) Mufti Afzal Hoosen Elias's *Quran Made Easy* (2015), and to some extent iii) Abdul Majid Daryabadi, *The Holy Quran* (1957). All of these scholars have drawn upon the Islamic revivalist Shah Waliullah, (1703-1762). This school of thought projects the Quran essentially as the divine book of guidance, valid for all time and place, aims at social reform among Muslim alerting them against un-Islamic

practices and innovations in matters of faith and explicates Quranic commnds in consonance with Hanafi fiqh.

Little wonder then that most of the explanatory notes in Usmani's work re-echo the *tafsir* embodied in *Maarif Al-Quran*. This comes out from a comparison between the two works, as for example, in the *tafsir* of Surah 47-58. The notes on the prisoners of war and Jihad in Surah Muhammad; on the Hudaibiyia peace treaty and Khaybar expedition in Surah Al-Fath; on norms related to interaction with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and code of social and interpersonal conduct in Surah Al-Hujurat; on Resurrection and Allah-man relationship in Surah Qaf; on *al-bayt al-mamur* (the populated house) in Surah Al-Tur; on Makkaans' treatment of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Surah Al-Najm; on the splitting of the moon in Surah Al-Qamar; on the classification of people on the Day of Judgement into three categories on the basis of their faith and conduct in Surah Al-Waqiah; on *mizan* (the divine balance) and monasticism in Surah Al-Hadeed and on *zihar* (a form of divorce in the pre-Islamic Arabia) and social norms of assembly in Surah Al-Mujadihah in Usmani's work have, their original in *Maarif Al-Quran.* His indebtedness to his worthy father is not, however, blameworthy.

"Usmani's Introduction" (pp.x-xxv) succeeds remarkably in familiarizing those new to the Quran with the concepts of divine revelation, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as its recipient, Makkan and Madinan Surahs, *asbab al-nuzul* (circumstantial setting of Quranic Surahs and verses), the collection of the Quran and Quranic punctuation. Special mention should be made of Usmani's exposition of *tafsir*, particularly its sources (pp.xix-xxv). Discerningly enough, he stresses the importance of reflection in deriving guidance from the Quran. One's self study should not, however, transgress Shariah limits. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has eloquently warned against any misinterpretation of the Quran under the sway of one's dogmatic suppositions. At the same time, Ulema should consistently strive to relate the eternal Quranic guidance to the challenges and issues of the day, as for example,

terrorism, LGBTQ+OA, gender justice, women's economic empowerment, Pluralism in the globalized world and Inter Faith dialogue etc. in our times.

Usmani's English translation reflects his reliance on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's earlier venture in 1934-1937. While discussing Prophet Muhammad's advent, Usmani has fittingly referred to the relevant Biblical passages which foretell his appearance (Deuteronomy 33:2-3, Mark 5:26-29, Luke 13:18-19 and Matthew 13:31).

In sum, Usmani's *tafsir*, while focusing on the underlying wisdom of Quranic commands, enables readers to fathom the Quranic guidance in lucid English.

Publication details of the first edition:

Farid Book Depot, New Delhi, 2005. Pp.1251.

40
Unal, Ali
The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English
(2006)

Driven by his pious enthusiasm, Ali Unal has undertaken a very ambitious venture of offering a copious explanation of the Quran. He appears to be fully conversant with Quranic scholarship, both classical and recent, as well as with the norms of writing commentaries on the Quran. It is not, therefore, surprising that his Foreword (pp. ix-xxviii) provides a traditional account of the Quran, its pivotal role, its main concerns of "demonstrating God's existence and unity, establishing Prophethood and proving and elucidating afterlife" (pp. x-xi); the Quran's received textual history, its stylistic features and the methodology for grasping its message (pp. xii-xxi). His account is faithfully close to the mainstream Muslim narrative. More significantly, his elucidation of Quranic things draws heavily on the Quranic text itself. In other words, his work reflects what is known as *al-tafsir bi'l-ma'thur* category (explanation of the Quran in the light of the import of other related Quranic verses and Ahadith). For example, his explanation of Verse 42 of Al-Baqarah is based on the germane points drawn from nine other verses, namely verses 71, 79, 140, 174 and 179 of Al-Baqarah, 167 of Ali 'Imran, 13, 46 of al-Nisa and 106 of al-Maidah. Regarding Ahadith, especially the ones specifying the circumstantial setting of verses, Unal presses home this perceptive observation: "Knowing the historical context of certain verses or passages in fact enhances understanding of their present or permanent relevance, it does not diminish or restrict it." (p. xxiv) For bringing out in full the thrust of an elliptic verse, Unal provides additional explanatory material within parentheses. Again, he demonstrates caution and sensitivity in culling this material from authentic sources. Unlike Yuskel, he refrains from interpolating his whimsical views into the body of the translated text.

In some instances, however, Unal inserts too many explanatory parenthetical statements for conveying what is already obvious. Illustrative of it is his rendering of Verse 97 of Al-Baqarah:

> (This is not all. They feel enmity towards Gabriel because he brings the Quran to you, not to one among them). Say (O Messenger, to them): "(The Lord of the worlds, my and your Lord, declares:)" Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel (should know that) it is he who brings down the Quran on your heart by the leave of God, (not of his own accord), confirming (the Divine origin of and the truths still contained in) the Revelations prior to it, and (serving as) guidance and glad tidings for the believers.

In contrast, Abdullah Yusuf Ali offers the following precise, well focused translation of the same:

> Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel for he brings down (the revelation) to your heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe.

Other such instances are Verse 24 of 'Abasa and 5, 7 and 11 of al-Takwir.

Among Unal's sources are standard tafasir such as those of al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, al-Qurtubi, al-Razi, and al-Zamakhshari. However, what makes Unal's work stand out above other is his drawing material from a host of recent Turkish scholars, mostly from Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Suat Yildrim and Fethullah Gulen. His other notable source is the Turkish version of Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi's *tafsir*, *Tafhim al-Quran* (of which the English translation has been brought out by the Islamic Foundation entitled, *Towards Understanding the Quran*). Some of his explanatory notes represent an intelligent summary of Mawdudi's *tafsir* on the issues under discussion (See for example, pp. 443, 569, 652 and 724).

Another strong feature of Unal's work is his dexterous use of the Bible in explicating the meaning and message of the Quran. An instance in point is his elucidation of the intended meaning of Verses 7 of Al-Fatihah and 111 of al-Tawbah. His account of

Mary's accomplishments, in the note on Verse 2 of Maryam, testifies to his familiarity with Biblical tradition.

A regrettable feature of Unal's work, nonetheless, is the low standard of its language and copy editing. At times, it becomes hard to make out what Unal means. His foreword is marred by several mistakes of idiom and usage. Here are some pitiable instances: "The Quran was revealed in the language of Arabic" (p. xviii), "It is impossible to find a single sample word in the Quran" (p. xxiv), "The features of the Quran's style and aspects of its miraculousness caused parenthetical explanations in this study." (p. xxvii), "I personally think of this fellow brother as one of those figures who can read our age well" (p. xxxvi). The two editors charged with the job of editing it (p. xxvii) should have been more conscientious.

Generally speaking, Unal adheres to the mainstream Sunni interpretation of the Quran. His elaboration of the opening verses of Surah 'Abasa, however, marks digression from the standard explanation of an event involving Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), a blind Companion, 'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum and a group of the unbelieving Quraysh tribe.

The ten Appendices in the work (pp. 1261-1316) deal with such commonplace topics as the Biblical prophecies about the Prophet Muhammad's advent, the status of women in Islam, main articles of faith in Islam, ruh (the spirit), war and Islam, and the Prophet's ascension. The material is authentic from the Islamic point of view and the coverage is comprehensive, though not always insightful or original. The three glossaries, of Allah's excellent names and of the proper nouns and terms in the Quran (pp. 1317-1352) serve as an aid for a better understanding of the Quran the overall objective to which Unal's work is geared, and which it manages to achieve, though not very remarkably.

Publication details of the first edition:

New Jersey, US, Light, 2006, 1365 pages, ISBN: 7884597840000

Number of Editions: 1

41
Bakhtiar, Laleh
The Sublime Quran
(2007)

The present work is an intriguing one on several counts. First, it does not even touch upon what its title promises to deliver. According to Bakhtiar, her work is "based on the Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi Schools of Law" (p.i). How can a bare English translation of the Quran, which does not contain even a single explanatory note, be paraded as representative of these juristic schools? Had she elucidated the Quranic commands, for example on marriage or inheritance, while referring to the stance of these schools, her claim would not have appeared so bewildering. More inexplicable is her double talk on this issue. Even in the face of the above title chosen by her, she has the temerity to assert in the same breath that her work is "free of any denominational or doctrinal bias" (p. liv). Moreover, this claim too, is baseless and misleading. For, both her Preface (pp. xliii-xlix) and Introduction (pp. 1-lv) betray her peculiar mindset, of which the components may be better noted in the light of her own statements about her credentials: "I am unlettered, so to speak, in modern Arabic

I have been schooled in Sufism which includes both the Jafari (Shia) ... and Sunni points of view... I lived nine years in a Jafari community in Iran... I grew up in the United States with a single parent, a Christian, American mother. My father, an Iranian, lived in Iran" (pp. xli and xlv).

More significant, however, in this context are the following three major categories of authorities on which she has drawn: 1) *Hujjat al-Islam* Mojtaba Musavi Lari, who endorsed her new, rather bizarre interpretation of Verse 34 of Surah al-Nisa - an interpretation which, according to her, had been "waiting for over 1400 years" (pp. lvii and lviii); 2) feminists such as Amina Wadud

and Margot Badran, who parade themselves as "Islamic Feminists" (pp. xlix and 710); and 3) *Encyclopedia of the Quran* edited by J.D. McAullife (Leiden, Brill, 2003, 5 Volumes), which retains all the centuries-old misconceptions and misperceptions spawned by the Orientalists regarding Islam, the Quran and Muslims. Little wonder then that her translation is littered with numerous mistakes. Take the following as illustrative:

i) The familiar Quranic expression, *rahim* (womb) is mistranslated in its extended sense as blood relations. (Verse 2 of al-Nisa) Her version tones down the high status which the Quran accords in this instance to motherhood and wifehood.

ii) In line with the feminist agenda of the present work, Verse 34 of al-Nisa is rendered in the following garbled, mutilated version: "Men are *supporters of wives*, because God has given some of them an advantage over other and because they spend of their wealth. So the ones who are in accord with morality are the *ones who are morally obligated, of what God has kept safe.*

But those whose resistance you fear, then admonish them and abandon them in their sleeping place *then go away from them...*" (p. 94) [italicized parts indicate her deviation from a faithful rendering of the Quranic text.]

She cannot be, however, credited with any originality on this count. In his venture, *The Quran: A Contemporary Translation*, Ahmed Ali mistranslates this verse along the same lines. Ali, however, goes a step farther than Bakhtiar in urging that one should go to bed with his obstinately defiant wife! (*The Quran: A Contemporary Translation*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 78).

Apart from displaying the interpolation of such whimsical notions, the present work has another irksome feature. In her prefatory note, Bakhtiar dismisses the existing English translations as lacking in "internal consistency and reliability" (p. xli). To remedy this, she claims to have employed "a different English equivalent for each Arabic verb or noun."

Moreover, she claims to have drawn on her data base of around 1,000,000 Arabic particles. She also claims to have followed the "formal equivalence" method of translation, which is exemplified by the King James Version of the Bible of 1611 (pp. xli and xlii). Notwithstanding all this hype, her rendering is, at times, almost the same as in Arberry's earlier translation of 1955. It is strange how she comes to reverberate Arberry despite the above stated elaborate arrangements by her for producing a new translation. Italicized portions of the following three passages point to the unmistakable similarity between her and Arberry's earlier versions:

i) *Tell them of the guests of Abraham when they entered upon him and said: Peace! He said:* Truly *we are afraid of you. They said:* Take no notice; truly *we give* you *good tidings* of a knowing boy. *He said: you give me good tidings even when old age bas* afflicted me? So *of what, then you give good tidings? They said: We give you good tidings of truth,* so be you *not of* the ones *who despair. He said: Who despairs of the mercy of his Lord except the ones who go astray?* (al-Hijr 15:51-56. Bakhtiar, pp. 302-303).

   And tell them of the guests of Abraham, when they entered upon him, saying, 'Peace!' He said, Behold, *we are afraid of you.* 'Be not afraid; *we give* thee *good tidings of a* cunning boy. *He said,* "What, *do you give me good tidings,* though *old age* has smitten me? *Of What do you give me good tidings? They said, We give thee good tidings of truth. Be not those of who despair.' He said, 'And who despairs of the mercy of bis Lord, excepting those that are astray?"* (A.J. Arberry, The Koran Interpreted, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1980, p. 284).

ii) The *People of the Book ask you* to send down to *them a Book from heavens;* indeed *they had asked Moses far greater than that; they had said:* Cause us to see God publicly; *so a thunderbolt took them* for their injustice *then they took the calf to themselves* after what had drawn near to them of clear portents; even so *We pardoned that,* (al-Nisa 4:153-154, Bakhtiar, pp. 115-116).

The People of the Book will *ask* thee to bring down upon *them a Book from heavens*; and *they asked Moses far greater than that*; for *they said*. 'Show us God openly.' And *a thunderbolt took them* for their evildoing. *Then they took to themselves the Calf* after the clear signs had come to them; yet *We pardoned them that*, (Arberry, p. 122).

iii) Then *exalted be God, The True King! Hasten not* the recitation before its *revelation* has been decreed to you; *and say: My Lord! Increase me in knowledge!* Indeed We made a compact *with Adam before*, then *be forgot;* and *We found no constancy* in *him*. (Ta Ha 20: 114-115. Bakhtiar, p. 369).

So high *exalted be God, the true King!* And *hasten not* with Koran ere *its revelation* is accomplished unto thee; *and say, O my Lord, increase me in knowledge.'* And *We made* covenant *with Adam* before, but *he forgot, and We found in him no constancy*. (Arberry, p. 347)

In some other instances Bakhtiar's translation is too literal, and in the absence of any explanatory notes, readers may not make out much of her translation:

a) *So when you have been emptied, work on, and have your Lord as your quest* (al-Inshirah 94:7-8, p. 700)

b) *The starting of the fire of God that will peruse the minds of humanity* (al-Humazah 104:6-7, p. 705).

It is a pity that this new translation does not contribute in any degree to advancing the understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran, notwithstanding the translator's intention to do so.

Publication details of the first edition:

Chicago, US, Qazi Publications, 2007. 710 pages, ISBN: 1567447503

Number of Editions: 1

42
Hammad, Ahmad Zaki
The Gracious Quran: A Modern-Phrased Interpretation in English
(2007)

It is so heartening to note the publication of this new English translation of the Quran in that it stands out above the existing ones on several counts.

Its chief merit consists in its deep and sincere concern for meeting almost all the needs of the uninitiated English speaking readers of the Quran who want to find out what the Quran is, what is its message and how best it should be studied for deriving the divine guidance. Ahmad Zaki Hammad, who had his academic training at both al-Azhar and University of Chicago, coupled with his decades long stay in the US, has addressed effectively and competently these and other related issues

To begin with, he has provided extensive and helpful background material geared towards preparing readers better for grasping the meaning and message of the Quran. His opening note, "Before You Read" (pp.xi-xii) is characterised by the overflowing sincerity of purpose and his keen desire for making the study of the Quran highly rewarding for readers, as is evident, for example, from these observations of his on the nature of the Quran:

> The natural world fills up our senses with countless signs of its All-Living God, and the Quran explains the significance of those signs directly from God to give life to our hearts. Indeed, both of these constituencies, the individual things of creation and the singular verses of the Quran, the Quran terms each one a sign. These "textual" and "contextual" worlds share much else, as well. There is utter distinctiveness in each and every sign, and also a profound repetition in their occurrence and collectivity. (p.xii)

The same noble spirit permeates the seemingly innocuous table of contents listing titles of 114 Quranic Surahs. What makes his detailed "Annotated Contents for the Gracious Quran" (pp.xxi-xxxiii) unique is his elucidation of the meaning and significance of each Quranic Surah title. For example, Surah Al-Anbiya is introduced as "the Surah that mentions the names of sixteen Prophets and Mary, illustrating the unity of divine message" (p.xxiii) and Surah Al-Kafirun as "the Surah that instructs the Prophet (peace be upon him) to inform the Disbelievers that the worship of false deities and the worship of One God are not, and can never be, compatible." (p.xxxii). Hammad often manages to capture the quintessence of the main subject matter of Surahs in his brief introduction on the contents page itself, which stands in a sharp contrast to all other English translations in which only Surah titles are listed, divorced from their context. As a result, some readers feel bewildered on coming across such heterogeneous Surah headings on the contents page as "The Cow, The Table Spread, Cattle, Thunder, The Bee, The Ant, The Spider, Crouching, The Sand Hills, The Winnowing Winds, She that disputes, She that is to be examined, The Ascending Stairways, He Frowned, The Fig, Palm Fibre, etc." This ingenous editorial innovation on Hammad's part will go a long way in drawing readers closer to a more fruitful study of the Quran.

As to his translation of the Quranic text, it is both elegant and reader-friendly. His "modern-phrased interpretation" is in lucid, idiomatic English, which is a delight to read. His rhythmic division and sub-divisions of the text of each verse into smaller chunks of chaste English has enhanced the presentation quality of the work, rendering it more readily comprehensible. Here are some instances in point, by way of juxtaposing Pickthali's and Hammad's translations:

1) And We rained a rain upon them. See now the nature of the consequence for evil doers. (Al-A'raf 7:84, Pickthall's translation)
   And we rained down upon them
   a devastating rain of marked stones!
   See how dreadful was the end

of the defiant Unbelievers. (Hammad's rendering of the above, p.153)

2) Nay, I swear by the city- and thou art an in-dweller of this city- and the begetter and that which he begat. We verily have created man in an atmosphere. (Al-Balad 90:1-4 Pickthall's translation)

No, indeed!
I do swear
by this Sacred City of Makkah,
while you, O Prophet,
are a free dweller
in this Sacred City of Makkah
Moreover, I swear
by all that beget
and all that is begotten!
Very truly
We created man
in a life of travail. (Hammad's translation of the above, p.664)

As is clear from the above samples, in his rendering Hammad has opted for paraphrases, rather than literal translation of the Quranic text. This device is no doubt, reader-friendly and conveys more effectively the tenor of the Quranic text, in comparison to the cryptic, enigmatic and, at times, incomprehensible English renderings in almost all other translations. However, utmost caution should be exercised while interpolating extra-Quranic material in the body of the translation of the Quranic text. Such material, no matter how useful it might be, should better appear within parenthesis, distinct from the translated version of the Word of God. This norm is regretfully not observed in Hammad's work. As a result, his rendering, though faithful to the spirit of the text, contains abundant material for filling gaps for the sake of a coherent narration, which is not supported by the wording of the text. Saiyyid Abul Ala Mawdudi's *Towards Understanding the Quran* (Translated by Zafar Ishaq Ansari, Leicester, Islamic Foundation, 8 Vols up to 2009) too, offers the paraphrasing of the Quranic text. However, Hammad's work surpasses it in employing

additional, extra-Quranic phraseology in trying to convey the import of the Quran.

As already indicated, Hammad's work is truly a treasurehouse of sound Quranic scholarship which is reflected in his comprehensive explanatory notes (Vol 2, pp.111-298), which apart from embodying a wealth of his own perceptive comments, draw also upon the rich *tafsir* corpus, referred to in his "A Library of Principal Sources of Islam" (Vol 2, pp. 15-16) and Bibliography (Vol. 2 pp. 307-312)

Hammad's thorough familiarity with the field of the English translations of the Quran comes out sharply in his judicious critique, "Representing the Quran in English: the Western Tradition" (Vol. 2 pp.67-94). His invaluable knowledge of the existing translations has indeed helped him in avoiding the errors marring these.

In all, it is a monumental English translation which is destined to meet many needs for the years to come. Remarkably it delivers what the translator promises to deliver - i) "It conveys an understanding of the intent of the words and verses of the Arabic Quran...according to how the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) reportedly explained them and how his Companions understood his elucidation. ii) It allows the new reader and non-specialist to understand the references and connections that an Arabic reader well-studied in the Quran would grasp. iii) It presents this reading of the Quran's verses in clear language." (p.xvi)

Publication details of the first edition:

Lisle, LA, USA, Lucent Interpretations, 2007, 2 Volumes. 820+312 (English) +345 (Arabic) pages, ISBN: 0978784901

Review on the Single Volume Abridged Edition (2014)

While reviewing the original edition of this work which had appeared in two volumes in 2007, I had expressed the hope that "this monumental English translation is destined to meet many needs for the years to come." (See my review, *Muslim World Book Review*) 30:1 (Autumn 2009), pp. 19-21. It is gratifying that in less than a decade as many as 21 editions of Hammad's translation have seen the light of day. Equally satisfying it is that the work under review, being the abridged edition in a handy, single volume, with an identical title, retains all the charming, rewarding reader friendly features of the original. Going by the publication history and trend of this work it appears that it is bound to set a new record as the most popular English translation of the Quran, surpassing the earlier highly popular versions by Abdullah Yusuf Ali and M. M. Pickthall.

It must be, however, at once pointed out that the present abridged edition leaves out the following sections of the original: explanatory notes, general notes and some background essays. Of these, the dropping of explanatory notes is a serious loss to readers. For, annotations in a Quran translation are not only helpful, rather essential for the non-Arab readers who cannot readily decode the varied Quranic allusions, terms and concepts. It is earnestly hoped that the next abridged edition will carry, at least, some explanatory notes.

This blemish apart, there are many positive features in this work which account for its huge reception substantiated by its several reprints. Perhaps Hammad had carried out at the conceptual stage of his work an extensive and intensive needs analysis of his potential readers. That is why his translation caters so well to the needs of the readers who are new to the Quran. His decades long experience as an Islamic activist in the USA has also contributed to sharpening and enriching his perception of the mindset, intellectual

level and expectations of his readers. Little wonder then that his prefatory note at the beginning of his work is aptly entitled "Before You Read" (pp. xi-xiv). This note, needless to add, mentally prepares readers better for drawing upon the meaning and message of the Quran. In the same vein are "The Annotated Contents" (pp. xxv-xlii), informing readers in advance about the main topics and concepts taken up in each Surah. Hammad is, however, at his best in the 150 pages long section, "Presenting the Quran" (pp. 1080-1233). Some of the issues lucidly explained in this section are: purpose of man's life, faith, destiny, free, will, worship, morality and the human intellect in the Quranic worldview; elucidation of the various names of the Quran and its divisions - *surah* and *ayah*; divine origin and pristine purity of the Quranic text; history of the collection of the Quran and why and how Muslims should promote its life-giving teachings. This is followed by his insightful and wide ranging critique of the existing English translations of the Quran, particularly the Orientalist and sectarian ones. At the end, he has done well in spelling out at length the principles and methodology employed by him in interpreting the Quran. This constitutes a valuable addition to the ongoing discourse on *tafsir*, which will be of much value both to the students of Quranic studies, and to the would-be translators of the Quran.

Hammad's thorough and discerning grounding in things Quranic is to the fore in his "Substantive Indexes" (pp. 1237-1402). Of these, the following are specialized ones which will be used with great profit by researchers: Quranic citations about i) Divine acts and attributes, ii) God, iii) Messengers and iv) Life Forms. There is some inevitable overlapping in these thematic indexes. Yet these are remarkably user friendly, enabling one to locate the Quranic stance on any issue in no time.

Hammad's explanatory translation of the Quranic text is the best part of this work, which has certainly contributed to its immense popularity. His rendering is in chaste, easy to understand English, which facilities readers' comprehension of the Quranic message. The following examples illustrate that in terms of its lucidity,

explicitness and directness it excels at places Abdullah Yusuf Ali's version:

(i) Abdullah Yusuf Ali: *"O Consorts of the Prophet! You are not like any of the (other) women: if you do fear (Allah), be not too complacent of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved, with desire: but speak you a speech (that is) just."*

Ahmad Zaki Hammad: "O wives of the Prophet! You are like no other category of women, if you remain God-fearing. So do not be soft in your speech with men, such that one is whose heart there is a sickness should become desirous. Rather, speak a forthright word...

(Al-Ahzab 33:32)

(ii) Abdullah Yusuf Ali: *"He [Moses] said: "O my Lord! I do fear that they will charge me with falseltood. My breast will be straitened. And my speech may not go (smoothly): so send unto Aaron." Ahmad Zaki Hammad: "He said: My Lord! Indeed, I fear that they will belie me. Thus would my breast narrow with apprehension, and my tongue falter in uttering Your words. So send, as well, for Aaron to accompany me as a messenger."*

(Al-Shu'ara 26:12-13)

(iii) Abdullah Yusuf Ali: *"Those who fulfil the Covenant of Allah and fail not in their plighted word; Those who join together those things which Allah has commanded to be joined, hold their Lord in awe, and fear the terrible reckoning."*

Ahmad Zaki Hammad: *"These are the ones who fulfil the covenants with God and do not break its solemn pledge to Him. Those are the ones who keep joined all the relations and obligations which God has commanded to be joined, and stand in utter awe of their Lord and fear the outcome of an evil reckoning."*

(Al-Ra'd 13: 20-21)

In sum, Hammad's translation stands out above others and caters admirably well to the needs of the English readership in its

presentational skills, its wide coverage of the material on the Quran and its several reader friendly features.

Publication details of the first edition:

Lisle, IL, USA, Lucent, 2014. pp. 1402.ISBN: 978-1-93546-02-05

43
Ghali, Muhammad Mahmud
Towards Understanding the Ever-Glorious Quran
(2008)

Notwithstanding being a truism, it is worth reiterating that a translation of the Quran must be authentic in terms of representing faithfully the Word of God for the guidance of those who cannot study it in its original Arabic. Since the translator of this English version of the meanings of the Quran, Muhammad Mahmud Ghali is a member of the Faculty of Languages and Translation at the prestigious Islamic seminary, al-Azhar university, one naturally feels at once assured about its authenticity. More importantly, this venture signifies that al-Azhar scholars have eventually woken up to the pressing need for making the meaning and message of the Quran available in world languages for the benefit of non-Arabic speaking people. It is indeed a welcome departure from the earlier stance of al-Azhar and other Muslim authorities who had serious reservations about the Quran translation activity. (For a detailed discussion on this issue see Muhammad B. Awwal, "Plaudits and Pitfalls in Translating the Quran," parts 1 and 2. *Muslim World League Journal* November-December 1988, Pp.11-15 and March-April 1989, Pp.47-49; M.M. Pickthall, "Arabs and non-Arabs and the Question of Translating the Quran," *Islamic Culture* 5 (1931) Pp.422-433; Muhanımad Shakir, "On the Translation of the Quran into Foreign Languages," *Muslim World* 16 (1926); pp.161-165 and W.G. Shellabear, "Can a Muslim Translate the Quran?," *Muslim World* (21) (1931), pp.287-303.)

The symbolic value of Ghali's venture apart, this translation regrettably fails to fulfill even the basic criteria of a good, even readable English translation. First, it has few explanatory notes. In the absence of any background information about the Quran, the

uninitiated readers are left groping in the dark about the subject matter, themes and thrust of Quranic Surahs and verses. Not a single Quranic allusion about numerous persons, places and events referred to in the Quranic text is elucidated by Ghali. Nor does it have any glossary to explicate Quranic terms and concepts which permeate the Quranic text. Needless to add, some elaboration of things Quranic by an al-Azhar scholar would have been of immense value for readers.

Worse, Ghali's lack of familariaty with English language and idiom has further undermined the worth of his translation. His grip over the target language, English is woefully thin. As a result, readers are not likely to figure out at several places the meaning of the Quran, what to say of deriving divine guidance from such a poorly constructed translation. Here are some illustrations:

1) "I have not been *wretched in invoking you*, Lord. And surely I fear my *patronized (relatives) beyond me*... So bestow upon me, *from very close to You, a constant patron*." (Maryam 19:4-5, p.305, Italics mine)

2) "Said he, "Do you *desiriously shirk* from my gods... And *I keep apart from you...''* (Maryam 19:46 and 48, p.308)

3) "... they *collapsed constantly*... Then there *succeeded even after them a succession*... so they will eventually *meet misguidance*." (Maryam 19:58 and 59, p.309)

4) "... the deeds of righteousness, are *more charitable from the Providence of your Lord in requital and more charitable for turning back.*" (Maryam 19:76, p.310)

5) "And I *cast on you belovedness from Me, and to be worked out under My Eye.*" (Ta Ha 20:39, p.314)

6) "Surely it is (given) to you neither to *hunger therein nor to go naked.''* (Ta Ha 20:118, p.320)

Instances of using outlandish, obselete expressions are aglore in his translation which stem from his pitiable knowledge of English. Take these as illustrative: "Family of the Book" (p.16)

for *Ahl al-Kitab* usually rendered as the People of the Book signifying Jews and Christians; "Seeds of Israel" (p.314) for *Bani Israil* (Children of Israel or Israelites); "Unburdening of sins" (p.9); "the face of the daytime" (p.59); "hypocrised" (p.72); "tilt away a tremendous tilting" (p.83) "an appointed book" (p.68); "none can be your overcomer" (p.71); "vestment" (p.29) and "errancy" (p.310)

The very few notes provided by Ghali are not likely to advance readers' understanding of the Quran. Far from being helpful, most of these being vague and inchoate may even confound them. Some instances in point are:

1) Verse 38 of Al-Baqarah: "The verb has an emphatic ending, thereby saying that guidance will come." (p.7) 2) Verse 26 of Ali Imran: "The Arabic word has the supplication suffix *ummah*" (p. 53). Both of these explanatory notes naively, rather mistakenly presuppose thorough knowledge of the nuances of Arabic language and grammar on the part of poor English speaking readers. 3) *Qintar*, a measuring unit referred to in verse 75 of Ali Imran is explained in the note merely as "a kantar" (p.59). Readers are thus left clueless about the quantum of this unit. 4) A common, ordinary pronoun featuring in verse 61 of Ali Imran is deciphered variously as "him or it i.e. the truth" (p.57). 5) The speaker in verse 80 of Ali Imran is identified as "*any religious Messenger*" (p.60, italics mine)

In sum, it is a pity that despite his pious intention and his enviable credentials Ghali has not been able to deliver the goods.

Publication details of the first edition:

Cairo, Dar An-Nashr Liljamiat, 2008, 607 pages. ISBN: 977-316-141-2.

Number of Editions: 2

44
Khalidi, Tarif
The Quran: A New Translation
(2008)

The appearance of the above new English translation of the Quran is a major event on more than one count. First, it has been brought out by a leading Western publishing house, Penguin and hence it should replace for the non-Muslim readers N. J. Dawood's obnoxious version published by the same Penguin since 1956, of which so far more than 50 editions fill Western libraries and bookshops. Even by 1990 its more than one million copies had been sold. Dawood, an Iraqi Jew, settled in the UK, offers a much maligned picture of Islam, the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his work which has served for more than fifty years as the only source on the above subjects for the unsuspecting non-Muslim reading public. In his introduction, Dawood projects violence and war as the Prophet's main preoccupation during his career. He blows out of proportion the Prophet's "crushing, expelling and raiding" of the Madinan Jews with his nefarious design to discredit both the Prophet and his mission. Several mistakes of interpolations and omissions mar his work further. Many Quranic verses and parts thereof have been left untranslated or mistranslated. In view of this backdrop it is all the more heartening that Penguin has now produced a new translation which faithfully represents the meaning and message of the Quran.

More importantly, Khalidi's translation is remarkable in its own right. To begin with, he deserves credit for stating lucidly and cogently in his Introduction (pp.ix-xxii) what the Muslims believe about the Quran-its divine origin, its recipient, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), its definitive collection, its contents and style, its internal consistency and its recurrent concepts, especially of the Afterlife. This account of his is of much significance in that most of the Orientalist /Western writings on the

Quran, which are the only source of information for these English-speaking readers present only a garbled version of these issues which are central to the Islamic belief. Take as an illustration his particular mention of this largely unacknowledged feature of the Quranic worldview which is, at times, eclipsed by the regrettable unjust patriarchal order in some of the Muslim societies: "But perhaps the most startling aspect of its [the Quranic) rhetoric is the deliberate address to women alongside men, rendering the Quran among the most gender-conscious of all sacred texts" (pp. xvii-xviii).

Occasionally does he betray the influence of the pernicious Orientalist distrust of the Quran, as for example in his disparaging reference to the "master narrative" about the history of the collection of the Quran (p.xii) and in his labeling of several Quranic events and figures as "unidentified" or "mysterious" in his Glossary (pp. 527-530). Yet his work affords readers a much better opportunity to appreciate what the Quran is than the recent and much-vaunted *Encyclopaedia of the Quran* (Leiden, Brill, 5 volumes), which casts all sorts of aspersions against the Quran, its so-called sources and its bearer, the Prophet.

As to Khalidi's translation, it is, on the whole, refreshing and accurate. His attention to retaining the dialogue form in his rendering and his use of the "eternal present tense," being excellent reader-friendly devices have enhanced the quality and readability of his translation.

Publication details of the first edition:

London, Penguin Classics, 2008. 530 pages, ISBN: 978-1-846-1402-1

Number of Editions: 1

45
Chaudhary, Muhammad Sharif
Meaning of the Magnificent Quran
(2010)

Regrettably this new English translation does not have much to recommend itself as a substantial contribution to the growing body of English translations of the Quran. One of its redeeming, rather unique, features is its thematic categorisation of the Quranic text into 365 "Lessons." This arrangement is aimed at helping the readers 'learn the Quran in one year by reading one Lesson every day.' (p. iii) This highly arbitrary, subjective exercise, however, does not do justice to the multi-layered Quranic text. The problem is aggravated further by Chaudhary's unimaginativeness in some instances. For example, the following Lesson headings do not bring out the intended message of the Quran. Nor do these offer any help or guidance to the readers: "Trial, The Trust, Slaughter of (sic) Cow, Causes of Setback, the Delude (sic)." Equally strange is Chaudhary's failure to identify any Lesson in as many as 24 Surahs, from Surah 90 to 114.

Likewise, it is hard to endorse his judgement that Surah 'Abasa contains only this Lesson: "The Prophet Admonished." Some of the Lessons suggested by him appear only in their Arabic terminology, as for example, "Iddah, Qiblah, Jizyah and Zihar," which English-speaking readers may find difficult to decipher. Furthermore, some of the Lesson headings are marred by faulty syntax and usage and will not be comprehended by the readers. The instances in point are: "Doom on Pharaoh, A beast will speak, conduct of Affairs in consultation and the Split of the Moon." (pp. vii-xiv)

The "Introduction to the Quran" (pp. xix-xxxi) is largely a banal account of some commonplaces about the Quran, as for example,

its division into Surahs/verses, its names, its divine origin, its relationship with the earlier Scriptures, its collection and its pristine purity. However, brief sections on its wide-ranging guidance, its appeal to reason and norms for its interpretation are both perceptive and useful for the uninitiated readers.

Chaudhary's translation is not supplemented by any explanatory notes. Only some brief information about the date and circumstantial setting of each Surah and an outline of its main themes and subject-matter are prefaced to all the Surahs. This helps the readers, to some extent, in grasping better the meaning and message of the Quran. However, these prefatory notes alone do not and cannot advance their understanding of the Quranic terms, concepts, personalities, geo-historical allusions, and juristic rulings. Since the work does not have any Glossary, this gap strikes one as all the more glaring.

Worse, however, is Chaudhary's unacknowledged borrowing of his English translation from Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's much earlier English translation published in 1930. Chaudhary who is, no doubt, prompted by a pious desire to promote the Word of God in undertaking this enterprise should have been careful about the ethical issue of intellectual property rights. Reproduced below are some passages from Chaudhary's and Pickthall's versions, which establish the former's unabashed lifting of the latter's work, and passing it off with slight revision as his own:

(1) For him are angels ranged before him and behind him who guard him by the command of Allah. Verily, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change that what is in their hearts. And when Allah intends misfortune for a people, there is none that can repel it, nor have they a defender besides Him. (al-Ra'd 13:11, Chaudhary, op. cit., p. 252).

(2) For him are angels ranged before him and behind him who guard him by Allah's command. Lo! Allah changes not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their

hearts. And if Allah wills misfortune for a folk there is none that can repel it, nor have they a defender besides Him. (M. M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran.* Beltsville, USA, Amana, p. 218).

(3) And never comes there to them a fresh reminder from the Beneficent, but they turn away from it. (al-Shu'ara' 26:5, Chaudhary, op. cit., p. 396).

(4) Never comes there unto them a fresh reminder from the Beneficent One, but they turn away from it. (Pickthall, op. cit, p. 341)

(5) Say (O Muhammad): O disbelievers! I worship not that which you worship. Nor worship you that which I worship. And I shall not worship that which you worship. Nor will you worship that which I worship. To you is your religion, and to me is my religion. (al-Kafirun 109:1-6, Chaudhary, op. cit., p. 782).

(6) Say: O disbelievers! I worship not that which you worship. Nor worship you that which I worship. And I shall not worship that which you worship. Nor will you worship that which I worship. Unto you your religion and unto me my religion. (Pickthall, op. cit., p. 686)

Furthermore, Chaudhary's work is disfigured, at places, by the use of bad English. The following extracts from his "Preface" illustrate the lack of his thorough grounding in English idiom and usage: "The Holy Quran was revealed... in the form of lectures During the times of the Prophet, his companions made *combinations of Surahs* into 7 portions ... The division of the Quran into 365 lessons has been made in a way that no subject or event or story or parable... is broken. (*italics mine.* p. iii) Chaudhary's extensive "Index" (pp. 789-812), nonetheless stands out as a testament to his meticulousness and painstaking attention to detail. His comprehensive thematic coverage and classification of all things Quranic would be used with much profit by those looking for

Quranic guidance on a wide range of issues and topics which this Index encompasses well. This, however, does not and cannot offset the glaring flaws in Chaudhary's work: lack of originality, unacknowledged borrowings, poor presentation and insufficient elucidation of the meaning and message of the Quran.

Publication details of the first edition:

Lahore, Pakistan: S. N. Foundation, 2010. pp. 814.

46
Emerick, Yahiya
The Meaning of the Holy Quran for School Children
(2010)

Yahiya Emerick, a prolific American writer on Islam was born to a Baptist Christian family in the USA, who embraced Islam in 1989. Since his acceptance of Islam he has devoted himself heart and soul to disseminating the message of Islam, as is evident from his fairly extensive list of publications. He holds the distinction of having translated the Quran earlier also, entitled as *The Meaning of the Holy Quran In Today's English* in 2000.

As the English translator of the Quran he features in the enviable band of those new Muslims who have embarked upon a similar venture, namely Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, (British/ Christian/1930), Muhammad Asad (Austrian/Jew, 1980), T. B. Iriving (Canadian/Christian, 1985), Abdal Haqq and Aishah Bewley, a husband and wife team, (British/Christian, 1999), Daoud William Peachy (American/Christian, 2012), Emily Asami, Amatullah Bentley and Mary Kennedy (American/ Christian, 2012 and 2020), and Maria Massi Dakake (American/ Christian, 2015).

The English translation of the Quranic text is taken from the author's earlier work. *The Meaning of the Holy Quran is Today's English* (2000), with nominal alterations suited for the young readership. In place of extensive explanatory footnotes in the 2000 edition; Emerick has done well to provide background information about the Quranic Surah/verses in catchy boxes and even illustrations. While the former is a highly welcome reader friendly strategy, equipping readers better with a clear understanding of the things Quranic. For example, Verse 183 of Al-Baqarah prescribes obligatory fasting during the blessed month of Ramadan (p.48). The box on the relevant page includes the list of actions involving

self restraint which should supplement and complement our fasting. It is, nonetheless, deplorable that in another box he has reproduced an inauthentic Jewish report in order to identify the bone of contention between Adam's sons, Habeel and Qabeel. The Quran is absolutely clear on the cause: Allah had accepted the offering of one while rejected the other's. Even in the face of this explicit Quranic statement Emerick resorts to a scandalous Israelite report which is more likely to confound young reader.

More atrocious is Emerick's obsession with illustrations which appear on almost every page of his Quran translation. Some of those depicted by him are *Sahabah* and 7th century lookalikes. His disregard for Shariah injunctions against the photographs of living beings, and that too in a version of the Quran, is odious. In producing a pictorial English Quran translation, he apes Sandow Birk's *American Quran* (Liverlight, USA, 2015, ISBN 978 163 1490187) which abounds in American men and women in their casual, scantily clad clothes in an urban setting on the margins of the every page of the holy text.

Surah Al-Fatihah opens in Emerick's work with a praying male, dressed in Western attire (p.15). There is no dearth of females either in the work. The translation of verses 1-5 of Surah Al-Anam is interspersed with a group photo of intermingling men and women. It is hard to figure out how this facilitates a better understanding of the Quranic passage under discussion which is about Allah's creative power. The woman carrying logs of wood in Surah Al-Lahab is unmistakably Abu Lahab's wife, alluded to in the Surah. Abu Lahab lying prone is aflame (p. 808). This portrayal of historical figures of the Prophet's day is downright sacrilegious. Some other outrageous illustrations in the middle of the Quranic text translation are: a group of men and women in regal clothes as dwellers of Paradise (p. 756); A young woman sleeping on a bed (p. 761); angels recording our actions (p.762); someone made to appear as Ibn Maktum (RA), the blind Companion alluded to in Surah Abasa (p.765); photos in Surah Al-Duha which is totally centered on Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (p. 788);

Abraha's army being routed by pebbles carrying birds (p.802); a gambling slot machine and a bottle of liquor (p.177), evil jinn (p.204) Israelites with the golden calf (pp.229 and 411); the picture of a shopping mall under the subheading, "Allah is in control of what He reveals." (p.355); Dhu Al-Qarnayn building a barrier (p.391); Maryam encountering an angel (p.396); the people of the Cave (p.412); a family comprising the head of the family, women and children sitting on a dinner table under the heading "Etiquette in the Prophet's household" (p.539); a woman's photo following the verse addressed to the Prophet's wives (p. 540); cars plying on road while citing the verses on travelling in the world (p.591); a preacher surrounded by some listeners, followed by this verse: "Know that Allah's Messenger is in your midst." (p.650); the subheading" What is Heaven Like" followed by some pieces of plush furniture (p. 664); sketches of "Idols and Angels as Mini-gods" (p.667); and the picture of the woman who complained to Allah against the inhuman form of divorce in the pre-Islamic Arabia, called *zihar* (p.690).

While Sandow Birk, a non-Muslim American translator of the Quran may be overlooked in view of his ignorance of Shariah prohibition against photographs of living beings, particularly of Prophet Muhammad's day, Emerick's work evokes abhorrence on account of his numerous illustrations of men and women, of which many pertain to the Quranic personalities.

For *kaifir* (unbelievers) Emerick has coined the following: "those who cover over their faith." This rendering somewhat tones down the enormityof their crime. Equally inapt is his choice of "affluence" and "beggars" for *izzah* (honour) and *dhilla* (disgrace). Verse 8 of Surah Al-Munafiqun, like some other Quranic verses, declares that all honour belongs only to Allah. However, he mistranslates it thus: "affluence belongs only to Allah." (p.714). "A Time line of the Major Events of Prophethood" (pp. 816-820) offers an accurate synoptic account of the illustrious life and career of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It is a pity that no

honorific formula (peace be upon him) has been used of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Emerick has painstakingly provided copious notes on the background information about Quranic passages. In so doing, he has drawn, in the main, on *asbab al-nuzul* (circumstantial setting of verses) reports. Such overemphasis tends to make the Quran appear as a dated work, occasioned by the events of the day, which, in turn, eclipses the universal, life giving message of the Quran which is valid for all time and place.

Though well intentioned, Emerick's venture has serious shortcomings, particularly of abundant illustrations and hence it is not suitable for the young Muslim readers.

Details of the first edition:
Amirah publishing.com. 2010, pp.821. ISBN: 9781467 990 530.

47
Ahmed, Nazeer
The Quran: A Translation in Modern Easy English
(2011)

Although the translator, Nazeer Ahmad is introduced as a NASA scientist, it is gratifying that his work is absolutely free from the so-called scientific interpretation of the Quran. Since his work does not contain any explanatory note, nothing can be said about his mindset. The work opens abruptly with the translation of Surah Al-Fatihah, without any preliminary authorial comments.

At the end of the work, however, there appears his note, "The Quran: How to Approach it" (pp.936-955). While introducing the Quran, he inserts this unsubstantiated report: "The Awliya (sages) have said that every Word of the Quran has forty thousand meanings." Ironically enough, he has not offered any meaning. His work is unremarkable, bereft of any striking feature. He has nonetheless claimed to have produced it "in easy to understand American English, which stays true to the literal meaning of Arabic words. It attempts to bring out the universal loving appeal of the Quran." (pp.937-938). It is beyond one how can a bare translation which does not delve into the Quranic message can "bring out its universal appeal"? Readers gain no knowledge about the Quranic persons, places and things. His piece is full of commonplaces and does not enlighten readers much about Islam/the Quran.

As to his translation, it is in tolerable English which is easy to understand. Here are some examples of his rendering:

> And serve you parents with excellent conduct And (serve) the near ones, and the orphans and the needy. And (serve) the neighbours who are close and the neighbours who are strangers. And (serve) the people who associate with you, and the wayfarer and those who are under you protection (prisoners of war). Indeed, Allah does not love the boastful braggart. (Al-Nisa 4:36).

The above version is not altogether free from minor mistakes, as for example he should have better employed more suitable

alternatives as indicated within parentheses: save (treat well), the neighbours who are close (the neighbor who is your relative), neighbours who are strangers (co-travellers), the people who associate with you (the companion by your side) and boastful braggart (arrogant and boastful)

> Say: I seek refuge with the Rabb of humankind, The sovereign of humankind, the worshiped One of humankind; from the evil of the whisperer, devious, who fosters unease in the hearts of humankind (and the whisperings) of the jinns and the humans. (Al-Nas 114:1-6)

The translation of this Surah should better read thus:

> (O Prophet), say: I seek safety and protection with the Lord of all people, the King of all people, God of all people. I seek safety and protection from the evil of those who whisper secretly, who prompt evil into the hearts of people. I seek safety and protection from the evil ones among the jinn and people. (Surah Al-Nas 114:1-6)

Although his work is devoid of explanatory notes, he has provided a few annotations only on Surah Al-Fatihah. As a NASA scientist he has done well to explicate the Quranic expression, *al-alameen* (1:2) in a sketchy scientific parlance. However, he falls short of bringing into sharper light Allah's creative wonder and boundless power. For he fails to draw readers' attention to these amazing astronomical facts that the earth notwithstanding its vastness before our eyes occupies a very tiny place in the cosmos. In our galaxy, the Milky Way, there are as many as 3.2 trillion planets. Our sun, though it appears so gigantic to us, is merely one of the 200 billion stars in our galaxy. The universe which is so far observable to us contains around 2 trillion galaxies, each with billions of stars and numerous planets. We should glorify Allah, the sole Lord (*rabb*) of bewildering *alameen* (cosmos).

The work lacks the Quranic text. Index is appended, though it is not exhaustive.

Publication details of the first edition:

American Institute of Islamic History and Culture, California. 2011. pp.956.

48
Busool, Assad Nimer
The Wise Quran: A New Translation
(2011)

Until 1980s the domain of the English translations of the Quran was almost the preserve of the Ulema. It was then unthinkable that someone not trained well in the traditional, classical Islamic scholarship would or could try his/her hand at rendering the original Arabic Quran into English. However, of late some new translations have been produced by such Muslim writers who are not religious scholars, heads of Muslim seminaries or religious groups. Instances in point are the translations by Syed Vickar Ahamed (2005), Laleh Bakhtiar (2007), and Edip Yuksel et al (2007). At one level, this trend augurs well for the cause of promoting the understanding of the Quran at a wider scale. The study of the Quran, the Word of God addressed to the entire humanity is not the privilege of any particular class. This truism needs no reiteration as Islam does not admit any concept of clergy. This explains why Muslim history did not witness the emergence of a John Wycliffe (c. 1320-1384), the medieval English theologian who, as the head of the Lollard movement, took the radical step of translating the Bible into vernacular English in 1382. The Lollard movement struck a serious blow to the monopoly of the clergy and made the study of the Bible accessible to the laity. At another level, however, this recent trend of the production of English translations by unqualified, untrained persons has opened the floodgate for spawning errors, confounding the unsuspecting readers, and even fiddling with the Word of God. Undoubtedly, it is true that the Ulema's insistence on only the interpretation of the Quran which is borne out faithfully by primary Islamic sources has led to conformity to convention and almost thwarted any attempt to relate the message of the Quran to the ever-changing ground realities of life and of the broader society. Yet, condoning instances of blatant

interpretation of the Quran according to one's own understanding which may be befogged by one's ideological predilections, whims or even fancy has its own perils. For, in certain cases, the study of an English translation could misguide altogether uninitiated readers who do not have access to primary Islamic sources. They may unwittingly mistake such translators' garbled versions as the intent of the Word of God itself.

Some of the hazards inherent in an unscrupulous translation of the Quran are exemplified by Assad Nimer Busool's English rendering. *The Wise Quran*. Both on the title page and as the running head on pages 718-798, the translator's name appears along with the reference to his Ph.D. degree. This academic distinction, though a prestigious one in its own right does not and cannot, however, entitle one to be a competent translator of the Quran. Worse, despite his limited and poor knowledge of the classical *tafsir* corpus, he has unabashedly made some tall claims. Take as illustrative his assertion on the title pages: 'Correct Modern English Translation Based on 20 Classic (sic) and Modern Arabic Quranic Interpretations.' Pitiably there in nothing correct about the above claims. For numerous instances of "incorrect" English grammar, syntax, idiom and usage mar his work. Of the twenty *tafasir* listed by him, only three are cited, and only once each.

Busool claims to have produced 'a more accurate and clear English translation of the Quran.' (p.11). Regrettably, this is not true in the face of its innumerable mistakes, of which some are detailed below. Yet he audaciously asserts: 'I found how inaccurate, often wrong, and unclear they [the existing English translation] are' (p.12). In support of this sweeping claim he cites only one example, and that too, is patently unconvincing. Rather, it exposes his own flawed understanding of the Arabic language. It is indeed ironical that his charge of incorrectness and inaccuracy applies more to his own version which is faulty on several counts. Equally self-defeating is his other charge against "some other translators" of having interpolated their personal opinions into their *tafasir*. Triumphantly he states: 'I strongly refrained from imposing or interjecting my

personal opinion or feelings in the translation and in the explanatory remarks within the text or in the footnotes, as some translators did in their translation' (p. 12). However, his translation teems with instances of blatant whimsical rendering, of which some are cited below.

One redeeming and distinguishing feature of Busool's work, nonetheless, is his meticulous identification of thematically identical verses by way of making copious cross references to these in his footnotes. For example, he assiduously informs that the import of Verse 8 of Al-Baqarah recurs in al-Sajdah 32:1; Yunus 10:57 and al-Isra 17:82. Likewise, he underscores the re-echo of the themes of Verses 6-7 of Al-Baqarah in Al-Baqarah 2:145; Yunus 10:96; al-Shura 42:24 and al-Jathiyah 45:23. Throughout, he has been successful in providing such helpful cross references. Needless to add, this reader friendly exercise on his part will go a very long way in promoting a better and comprehensive understanding of the Quran, especially for those who are keen on gaining an overview of the Quranic stance on a range of topics and issues.

Surprisingly enough, Busool displays no such thoroughness in his too brief, cursory chapter consisting literally of only four short sentences on "Available English Translations" (p. 15). Far from analysing the mindset, dogmatic presuppositions and relative strengths and weaknesses of, at least, a few leading English translators, he rests content with passing this non-specific, sweeping judgment: '... the majority of them contain some major errors and mistranslations.' (p. 15). It is on the basis of this shallow assessment that he parades his own rendering as the 'correct modern English translation based on 20 classic (sic) and modern Arabic Quran interpretations' (Title page). In grappling with the "Message of the Wise Quran" (pp. 16-18) he does well to affirm that the Prophet Muhammad's Sirah (the Prophet's illustrious character and conduct) demonstrates all that the Quran preaches. Aptly enough, he cites the Prophet's blessed wife A'ishah's report testifying to the above. However, his translation of the relevant

hadith leaves much to be desired. Busool's erratic version reads thus: "His manners are the manners of the Quran" (p. 16). His use of the expression, "manners" does not convey in full the intended effect of the hadith. Furthermore, it is hard to figure out "the manners of the Quran."

This Quran translation under review does not contain the text of the Quran, which is a serious shortcoming, especially in view of the fact that the translator is a Palestinian Arab who has lectured on the Quran for years under the aegis of the Quran Society of Greater Chicago, USA. This omission appears all the more glaring as he is found, at places, delving deep into the grammatical and etymological forms of certain Arabic words which constitute the Quranic text. Take the following note of his as an illustration: "*Na'budu* is derived from the Arabic root word *abada... Ibadah* signifies the doing of what God approves. *Abid*, pl. *'Ibad..."* (p.20). In the absence of the Arabic text, how can readers make any sense out of such discussions on something non-existent. It is a pity that he has wasted his time, energy and resources on the above unhelpful points in his commentary on Surah al-Fatihah while he does not say even a single word to enlighten his readers about the meaning and message, significance and pride of place of this pivotal Surah. The same indifference towards explicating things Quranic mars his curt branding of Zakah as 'an annual tax' (p.27). Once again, he does not tell his readers anything about the importance of charity in Islam and the unmistakable nexus between Zakah and the Islamic ideals and practice of social justice, fraternity, man's trusteeship of his belongings, and his ultimate answerability to Allah. Nor does he draw the reader's attention to the crucial Islamic teaching of shunning the love of material goods, which lies at the core of this Islamic religious duty.

More reprehensible, however, is the interpolation of *Isra'iliyat* (unsubstantiated reports rooted in the Judaeo-Christian tradition) in his work that seeks to impart a correct and accurate interpretation of the Quran. This tends to even distort the message of the Quran. For example, his following reckless remarks about Harut and

Marut, the two angels referred to in Surah Al-Baqarah in the context of the Prophet Solomon's account, project these in dark colours and pervert the Islamic stance on angelology: "They [the devils] taught people witchcraft, and what was sent down to the two angels at Babel, Harut and Marut. However, these two (angels) taught no person, until they had warned him: "Indeed, we fell into temptation." (Al-Baqarah 2:102)

Another regrettable example of his carelessness and whimsical bent of mind in translating and interpreting the Quran is the following: Allah's plain directive to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and Muslims, at large, not to do a favour to someone, with the intention of extracting something more from him in return is misconstrued by him thus: "And do not feel weak for a long time." (al-Muddaththir 74:6)

This mistranslation is followed by his equally bizarre explanation: "God gave this order to His Prophet, because he became frightened, and weak when he saw the angel on the horizon, and then he went home to sleep." (p. 637)

Although his work contains many explanatory notes, most of these are banal and inauthentic. Far from facilitating a better understanding of the Quran among readers, his notes do not provide them with any guidance or food for thought. Rather, some of these might confound them. Here are some examples:

(a) On the circumstantial background of the revelation of Surah al. Anam he informs: "Revealed at Makkah, complete during the night, accompanied by seventy thousand angels hymning the praise of God" (p. 140). Was this extremely long Surah comprising 166 verses sent down on a single night? What is meant by the seventy thousand angels accompanying it? In sum, the above note raises more questions than it answers.

(b) The same holds true for his inexplicable inference which he has drawn from Verse 26 of al-Araf: "... one can conclude that God The All-Mighty and The Wise sent down garments from Paradise to Adam and Eve" (p. 167).

(c) According to him, the term *kuffar* (unbelievers) used in Surah al-Tawbah, "is applicable to the pagan Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula, *who had no choice but to become Muslims, because they are the backbone of Islam...* (p. 217). The italicized portion of his explanation does not make any sense, especially because of his atrocious use of tense. The same point articulated better would not have confounded readers.

(d) His comment on Verse 41 of Surah al-Rad is both unsubstantiated and somewhat whimsical: 'This verse is one of the scientific miracles of the Quran. Recent scientific studies showed that the land shrank hundreds of miles since its creation' (p. 263). It is fairly clear from the context of the verse under discussion that the unbelieving Arabs are told that Allah has been reducing the land under their control. This verse has nothing to do with any scientific phenomenon. Busool does not care either to cite any of 'the recent scientific studies' which discuss the size of the earth since its creation!

(e) His other dubious comment is regarding the infant Jesus's miraculous assertions about himself, as reported in Verse 33 of Surah Maryam: "This is Jesus (sic) claim, and not God's. Here God narrates what Jesus, the baby claimed at (sic) his infancy without knowing what God decreed for him in the future." (p.318) In this particular instance his hazy ideas about miracles and God-Prophet relationship are bound to perplex readers.

(f) His failure to identify the Quranic geo-historical allusion is evident from this extremely unhelpful and pointless explanatory note on Queen Sheba's palace, referred to in Verse 44 of Surah Saba: "The palace here is the palace that was assigned to her for her stay." (p.393). His vague, verbose comment does not tell readers anything about the people of Saba, the unbelieving Queen of Saba, her historic encounter with the Prophet Solomon (peace and blessings be upon him) and her ultimate acceptance of the One True God.

(g) His inability to bring out in any degree the intent of the Quran is to the fore also in his unspecific, loose note on *Laylatun*

mubarakah (al-Dukhan 44:2). He defines it thus: "The blessed night is *Laylatul-Qadr*, the Night of Honour" (p. 519). As a result, readers get no clue as to which night this is. Worse, the same allusion is not deciphered in his commentary on Surah al-Qadr either (p. 694). The important bit of information about the sending down of the Quran on the blessed night of Ramadan is not conveyed at all to readers, what to speak of any discussion on the significance of *laylat al-qadr*.

(h) At places, his explanatory notes convey only partial, trivial information about the issue under discussion, at the expense of even suppressing the more important, vital parts. For example, his note on the Prophet Abraham (peace and blessings be upon him) introduces him in only these terms of reference: 'In the Arabic Islamic literature, Abraham is known of (sic) his generosity and hospitality among the Arab Muslims' (p. 551). Nothing is said here about the Prophet Abraham's pre-eminence as the patriarch held in esteem equally by Jews, Christians and Muslims, his quest for truth, his building of the first house of God, the Kabah, and his exceptionally close relationship with Allah which earned him the coveted title of *Khalil Allah*. Instead, Busool's whole focus is on his hospitality, a single trait of his multi-faceted, towering personality. Another irksome point in Busool's note is his repeated reference to "Arab" Muslims/ literature. It goes without saying that all Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, extol the Prophet Abraham (peace and blessings be upon him), as his name features in the *salawat* recited by all Muslims as part of their obligatory daily prayers.

(i) His inability to provide any evidence in support of his sweeping assertions comes out in his note on Verse 47 of al-Dhariyat: 'The expansion of the universe is one of the scientific miracles of the Quran. Recent scientific discoveries proved that the universe (sic) still expanding' (p. 554). First, the Quran is not a book sent down for presenting scientific miracles. It is

frustrating to note that Busool has not specified any of the 'recent scientific discoveries' which bear out his above claim.

(j) His other misplaced, sweeping claim is as follows: "In fact, there is no other book, which is easy (sic) to memorize than the Quran" (p. 565). Notwithstanding our tremendous regard for the Quran, we should not be carried away by emotions in making any such tall, unqualified claim. Out of His boundless mercy Allah, no doubt, enables young, and even non-Arabic speaking Muslim children, to memorize the Quran. However, it is a highly exaggerated statement that the Quran is easier to memorize than any other book, including a small one which might be in one's own mother tongue.

(k) Busool's obsession with equating Quranic truths with mundane scientific facts surfaces in his observation: 'The cry which God sent against Thamud brings to mind the supersonic boom of our days' (p. 566).

(1) The same holds true for his remark on Verse 37 of al-Rahman, describing the appearance of the sky on the Last Day. He renders it thus: "The skies will split, and becomes (sic) like a red rose," followed by this comment: 'Few (sic) years ago, the telescope, the Hubble, caught a glimpse of an exploded star. It looks exactly like a red rose' (p. 571).

(m) His explanatory note on the well known incident involving the Prophet's wives, as described in the opening verses of al-Tahrim, instead of clarifying the matter, is bound to confuse the readers. For his translation: 'When the Prophet confided to one of his wives (a secret)' (al-Tahrim 66:2) is followed by this mystifying note: "It seems that the true nature of that secret is unknown, because the classic (sic) Quran interpreters give two trivial accounts of that secret, which do not warrant a revelation from God" (p. 611). His dig at the classical *mufassirun* and their well recorded, cogent account of that particular incident is totally uncalled for. Intriguingly enough, he himself does not shed any light on the matter for the benefit of readers after he seeks to discredit the classical version.

(n) Another example of his unhelpful and unsubstantiated gloss is his following explanation of the Quranic term Sijjin, occurring in Verse 8 of al-Mutaffifin: "Sijjin is a horrible of (sic) Sijn, jail in the bottom of the seventh earth" (p. 665). No source is cited by him in support of his notion about the seven earths. Moreover, the atrocious use of English in the above note may be hardly comprehended by readers.

(o) His total disregard for providing accurate, specific historical details for readers is betrayed by this vague note of his: "Thamud is an ancient Arab tribe, who lived long before Islam." (p. 682). Such paucity of concrete information can hardly be condoned in an academic work of this standard.

Another major flaw disfiguring Busool's work is its poor presentation, exemplified by countless mistakes of English grammar, syntax, idiom and usage. A translator must enjoy command over the target language. For otherwise the very purpose of translation is defeated as the target readership is put off. Of the many errors vitiating the work under review, only a few are listed below, indicating his ludicrous, outlandish mistakes:

(a) In the Pre-Islamic period certain people when they enter the state of Ihram during the pilgrimage season, when they returned... (p. 49).

(b) During those four sacred months there were no war. (p. 50).

(c) Jacob is the grandson of Abraham, he is, Jacob the son of Isaac. (p. 39).

(d) It is been reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) died... (p. 123).

(e) (May God be exalted of what they say). (p. 131).

(f) al-Bahirah is a she-camel, which her milk dedicated to their idols. (p. 137).

(g) This is the example of the human being life, which starts young, vital and strong (p. 481).

(h) God, The Kind, increases the reward for a good deed from tenfold upto seven hundred fold, or to how many folds. (p. 508).

(i) God, the Beneficent revealed this chapter to innumerate His graces on the human beings. (p. 569).

(j) God, the Exalted, repeated this powerful, challenging question this big numbers of times (p. 570).

(k) ... they think that God love them and honour them. (p. 621)

(l) God, in this noble chapter, used Prophet Noah, and his struggle with his people for 950 years relentlessly. (p. 628).

(m) They deprive themselves from food (p. 644).

(n) Only he who follow the Reminder ... (p. 454).

(o) ... if anyone brakes wind, he should perform ablution. (p. 723).

(p) I decided to let the Wise Quran speaks of itself. (p. 731).

(q) The Wise Quran major themes follows... (p. 733).

(r) ...when God joined between the Quran and human being, He says... (p. 732).

(s) There are no ambiguity in this kind of verses. (p. 733).

As many as 15 Appendices appear in Busool's work (pp. 717-784). Of these, only two or three have some academic substance and merit. Others consist of commonplaces or such points which are incidental to understanding the Quran. Appendix 1 "Interpretation of Verse 34 of Surat al-Nisa" (pp. 717-730) lays bare Busool's apologist, modernist mindset. For, following in the footsteps of some recent heretic, feminist translators as Ahmed Ali (1984), Laleh Bakhtiar (2007) and Edip Yuksel (2007), he insists that *wadribu hunna* is an ambiguous term and used as a metaphor in the Quran, 'Indeed, to understand the above term as "beat them" is a license for woman abuse... there is a notion of insult, humiliation, and abuse to women' (pp. 718 and 719). Swayed by these notions, he has the audacity to suggest this way out: 'Instead of beating or

hitting,' perhaps the command *wadribu hunna* should be interpreted as "mate with them, copulate with them, make love to them." Therefore the verse should be translated: 'As to those women whom you fear to disobey you, admonish them (if they do not heed), turn your back to them in bed, then (while you are next to them in bed), try to make love to them' (p. 725). In this instance Busool is downright guilty of perverting the intent of the Quran.

Appendix 2, "Facts about the Wise Quran" (pp. 731-732) resurrects pointlessly the dated issue of the createdness or otherwise of the Quran. His following conclusion on the above issue does not take readers anywhere: "The Wise Quran existed in God's *'Ilm,* Knowledge. How? We do not know, but we know about its existence as He informs us" (p. 732).

Appendix 3, "Themes of the Wise Quran" (pp. 733-734) provides a synoptic account of the major themes, though in an extremely cursory, unsatisfying fashion, devoid of even bare details. For example, not a single Quranic story is mentioned or specified under the rubric, *qissah* (story). Appendix 4, "Major Articles of the Quran" (pp. 735-736) is relatively somewhat useful for readers in that it, at least, identifies the number of verses devoted to each of these articles. Readers thus learn that the Quran has one thousand verses each on parables and supplications.

Appendix 5, "The Spiritual and the Material in the Wise Quran" (pp. 737-740) too, makes a fair reading, pointing to the amalgam of faith and reason in Islam.

Appendix 6, "The Chronological Order of the Revelations of the Chapters of the Wise Quran" (pp. 741-743) fails to press home these two vital facts about the issue under discussion: a) The present, received Surah order of the Quran was ordained by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in accordance with Allah's directive. b) Some verses within a Surah were revealed at a different, later date. The most telling example is afforded by Surah al-Alaq, of which the first five verses constitute the earliest revelation. Its other verses were sent down later.

Appendixes 7-13 merely list the names of Allah, His Messengers, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), the Quran, the Day of Judgement, Paradise and Hell (pp. 744-767).

Appendix 14 rightly identifies the 14 Quranic verses, of which the recitation and hearing entail *sujud al-tilawah* (prostration upon reciting or hearing the verse).

Appendix 15 (pp. 771-783) reproduces some of the supplications featuring in the Quran. Strangely enough, the translation of the Quranic passages in this Appendix (Yunus 10:9-10 and al-Furqan 25:74, pp. 781 and 783) is at variance with his own rendering of the same passages in the main body of the work on pp. 219 and p. 378 respectively. For example, the Quranic expression *muttaqin* is mistranslated in the Appendix as "those who believe in God and obey His commands" (p. 781) whereas it is rendered correctly in the main body as "those who guard their souls against evil" (p.378). Surah al-Anam is inaccurately numbered as Surah 8, rather than as Surah 6 (p.779).

His "Index" (pp. 785-798) too, abounds with mistakes. On p. 754 it is stated that the Prophets Abraham and Moses (peace and blessings be upon them) are mentioned in the Quran 69 and 136 times respectively. However, in the Index they get only 3 and 29 entries respectively (p. 785 and 793). Likewise, there is a partial, incomplete coverage of Prophets David (p. 787), Jacob (p. 792), Jesus (p. 792), Joseph (p. 792), Noah (p. 793), Shuayb (p. 796) and Solomon (p.796) in the Index. By definition, an Index should be comprehensive, listing all that which is there to know. A partial index misleads, rather cheats readers. His inclusion of these entries apparently defies logic: "enlight admonition (sic) (p. 788), dust (p. 788) and future" (p. 789). While the town name Makkah is rightly used throughout the main body of the work, its antiquated form Mecca appears in the Index (p. 793). The transliteration system adopted by Busool is defective. This is all the more glaring in the face of his possessing the highest degrees in Arabic and Islamic Studies. Here are some instances of his awkward transliteration: Sari'u el-Hasbin (p. 748), *Khairu er-Rahimin* (p.745), *Arhamu er-*

Rahimin (p. 745), Ohod (p. 794), Yaqoub (p. 797) and *Zaqqoom* (p. 798).

To sum up, Busool's translation does not have much to recommend itself in view of its very many shortcomings at the levels of both conception and execution.

Publication details of the first edition:
Xlibris Corporation, 2011. pp. 798. ISBN: 9781453525258.

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Khan, Wahiduddin
The Quran: Translation and Commentary
(2011)

Wahiduddin Khan (b. 1925) is a prolific Indian scholar of Islam. He is nonetheless criticized by some for his apologetic views.

This is the English version of the author's Urdu translation and commentary of the Quran, *Tadhkir al-Quran* published in 1985. It is gratifying that this *tafsir*, which facilitates in its own way a better understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran, ably edited by the author's daughter, Farida Khanam, is now accessible to a wider English-speaking readership. While this English version is largely faithful to the Urdu original, it is a great pity that Khan's excellent Introduction featuring in his Urdu version has been replaced by a new, though somewhat banal and inane, Introduction (pp. ix-xvi). The former stands out for its cogent explanation of both the form and contents of the Quran as well as for its enumeration of the distinctive features of the work, enabling readers to appreciate what kind of book the Quran is and what type of *tafsir* is Khan's foray. For reasons best known to the editor, this valuable prefatory note has been substituted by a new one which is marred by several flaws, some of which are discussed below.

The present work represents a *tafsir* with a difference. This unconventional *tafsir* does not delve into the Quranic commands, events, personalities, places, and geo-historical allusions. Nor does it contain the usual verse-by-verse annotations. Rather, Khan's overarching concern is to bring out the overall message of the Quran, as he offers paraphrases of and explanatory comments on the thrust of the chunks of the Quranic verses which he has thematically placed together. It must be said that it is to Khan's credit that he has been remarkably successful in exploring and conveying energetically and effectively the divine notes of

admonition and reminder which permeate the Quranic text. More significantly, throughout this *tafsir* he stoutly vindicates, amplifies and illustrates the three basic articles of Islamic faith *tawhid* (monotheism), *risalah* (the institution of Prophethood) and *akhirah* (the Hereafter).

In his Introduction Khan defines well the Quran as 'the verbal expression of the same Divine Reality which is in consonance with man's own nature' and 'in the language of nature.' (p. ix) However, he fails to explicate or substantiate his other assertion:... 'the Quranic concept of man as the natural recipient of God's word has become a reality in modern times. The science of genetic code and the findings of anthropology both fully support this viewpoint.' (p. x). His branding of *jihad* as a peaceful ideological struggle (p. xiii) and his emphatic refutation of any link between Islam and violence will go a long way in dispelling some misperceptions about the Quran and Muslims. Khan should be complimented for addressing these concerns of our times. These valuable points apart, his Introduction is nonetheless rather incoherent. For its various sections do not have any interlinking thread. Equally irksome is the use of such awkward and unidiomatic expressions as "a realized person," "God Realization," and "conformance." (p. xi) The section which ambitiously announces to spell out the 'Creation Plan of God' (p. x) does not go beyond stating some commonplaces about Allah's reward and punishment.

As already indicated, this work helps readers appreciate better the message underlying the Quran. Khan appears at this sharpest in pressing home some Quranic truths, as for example, when he points out the rationale behind the Quranic prohibition of intoxicants, gambling and other abominations, featuring in al-Ma'idah 5:90: 'A drunkard is devoid of any awareness of others' trouble or grief, while for a gambler, others are only subjects of exploitation. A society where such people exist will be vitiated by clashes and enmity.' (p. 319)

Equally profound and perceptive are his explanatory notes on the Quranic restrictions on the Hajj pilgrim (al-Ma'idah 5:94-95, p.

321); his vindication of the concept of the One True God (Yunus 10:68, p. 604); his comparative analysis of the Biblical and Quranic accounts of the miracle granted to the Prophet Moses (peace and blessings be upon him), pointing to the flaws marring the former (Ta Ha 20: 22, p. 942), his insistence on shunning the confrontationalist stance (al-Ankabut 29:60, p. 1213); his description of the virtues which should adorn the character and conduct of the believers (al-Ahzab 33:35, p. 1264); and his account of the mindset and approach of the preacher of truth (Fussilat 41: 33, p. 1428). In these and many other instances Khan acquits himself well in bringing out sharply the guidance embodied in the Quran. His *tafsir* of such passages thus draws the readers closer to the message of the Quran and invests them with a sense of purposiveness and direction.

Thus the work under review is geared towards helping them in leading their lives in accordance with the will of their Creator and Lord. And in this resides the chief merit of Khan's tafsir.

However, at several places Khan's interpretation of things Quranic is unsatisfactory and somewhat tendentious. For instance, his unconventional elaboration of the Quranic statement that Allah had taught Adam all the names (Al-Baqarah 2:31): 'God brought all the progeny of Adam. He said to the angels: 'Look, these are the progeny of Adam. Can you give me the name of each one of them, and say what sort of people they will be?' (p. 13) Khan has been a prolific writer on Islam in Urdu in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. His peculiar views on the nexus between Islam and political power have evoked sharp criticism against him among Muslims at large. His patently apolitical portrayal of the Prophet Abraham (peace and blessings be upon him), with reference to al-Nahl 16:22, betrays the same mindset which has drawn ire against him: 'Abraham was given the good things of this world (*wa'ataynahu fi'l-dunya hasanah*)... It is known that in this world Abraham had neither crowds surrounding him nor the throne of power... This shows that in the eyes of God the betterment of this world hinges neither on public popularity nor on wealth or power....' (p. 826) Under the

sway of the same notion he represents the Prophet Moses (peace and blessings be upon him) in a similar mould while explicating al-Shuara' 26:35: 'Moses's mission was totally peaceful and it has no direct relations with politics or government.' (p. 1125)

While trying to shed light on the Quranic allusion to the Prophet Noah's ark in al-Ankabut 29:15 and al-Qamar 54:15 he recklessly cites this speculative report that 'constant efforts are being made to reach this boat in the Ararat mountain range in Turkey.' (p. 1200) Since he had included this report first in his Urdu tafsir in 1985, in the present English version published after more than 25 years, far from reporting the same speculation, he should have informed the readers the subject matter of al-Ankabut 29:17, he has gone too far in equating of the result of those "constant efforts." In denouncing polytheism with celebrating the fruits of green revolution that has helped many countries achieve self-sufficiency in food production. (p. 1201) It is nobody's contention that advancements in agriculture or any other branch of science pose any challenge to the concept of the All Powerful, One True God. His account of the Makkan unbelievers stands discredited by his own contradictory stances. For, he first declares: 'The addressees of the Quran were not disbelievers in the Day of Judgement.' (p. 1281) However, on the very next page of his work, he asserts: "The people of Makkah held the Prophet and his companions in contempt, and used to mock them. They did so due to their disbelief in the Hereafter." (p. 1282)

Whereas Khan's stance on miracles is generally in consonance with the centuries-old tradition of tafsir *bi'l-ma'thur* (the Quran interpretation based on the primary Islamic source), his note on the Prophet Abraham's sacrifice of his son at Allah's command, as referred to in al-Saffat 37:108, is couched in ambivalent language, which is liable to be misconstrued. For, he states: 'Hijaz (Mecca and Medina) was a waterless desert and to settle anyone in such arid surroundings amounted to sacrificing him alive. God ordered Abraham to offer his son, Ishmael as a sacrifice, and in all obedience Abraham submitted to God's will.' (p. 1343) Equally confused and confusing is his assertion that the believers 'fraternize

with God's angels. Such people take angels as their comrades (companions) for the period extending from this world up to the Hereafter. The angles shower godly emotions on their hearts, and in difficult times give them peace of mind, through fine aesthetic experiences, they convey to them God's good news.' (p. 1427) Such a pivotal role assigned to the angels by Khan in Islamic devotional worship by ordinary believers is misplaced. He should have better adduced the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and the Companions as role models and mentors for the believers. Likewise his thoughts on the issue of the rise and fall of nations, as part of his elucidation of al-Dukhan 44:32, appear to be too subjective, and somewhat whimsical and dogmatic. These, too, are liable to be misunderstood by many. For, they raise more questions than they answer, especially in the face of the overall, consistent ascendancy of the West, and the decline of the Muslims in the last five hundred years: 'In this world, the downfall of one nation and the rise of another do not happen accidentally ... God looks at various peoples and then decides to give dominance to those nations whom He finds deserving: those whom He finds undeserving, He dethrones and commits to subjection.' (p. 1479) Another contestable assertion of his is: 'If those who are Muslims by birth study Islam afresh, and with renewed Islamic consciousness, become believers or Muslims, they too will be entitled to a double reward in the eyes of God.' (p. 1601) Such judgemental pronouncements about someone's faith should better be avoided. Furthermore, it is hard to think of any plausible reason for the distinction maintained by him in the above between "believers" and "Muslims." Do the two even with their 'renewed Islamic consciousness' remain so distinct from each other as to be labelled differently?

An intriguing aspect of the present English version is the deliberate toning down of the censure which is directed against the Jews or the children of Israel in the Urdu original. Here are some glaring instances in point: (i) The original Urdu extensive note on Al Imran 3: 110-112 (*Tadhkir al-Quran*, New Delhi, Maktabah al-Risalah, 1985, pp. 152-153), detailing the Jews' misconduct has been

considerably abridged, by way of dropping all the uncharitable references to the Jews. (p. 162) (ii) Likewise, the Jews of the Prophet's day, branded as the Muslims' opponents in the light of Ali Imran 3:118-120 (*Tadhkir al-Quran*, op. cit., pp.154-155) are replaced by 'the People of the Book.' (p. 165) More inexplicably, the Jews are not presented in such dark light as they appear in the Urdu original (*Tadhkir al-Quran*, op. cit., pp. 154-155 and 165-166).

Although this is an extensive tafsir, it contains only a handful of Ahadith, and even these are not cited in full. Nor is there any discussion on *ahkam* (the Quranic commands and their concomitant jurisprudential rulings). Farida Khanam's translation is satisfactory in that she has rendered the Urdu original into fluent English. The Index (pp. 1751-1763) is, however, borrowed, in the main, without any acknowledgement, from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's earlier English translation (1934-1937). The Concordance (pp. 1764-1770) lists some Quranic terms, concepts and personalities.

However, the editor appears to be ignorant of the requisites of this scholarly apparatus. For, not all the entries are listed. Nor are these explained properly. For example the entry on the Flood; 'So we let loose on them a flood' (p. 1666) or the other one on intoxicants: They ask you about 'intoxicants and gambling' take the readers nowhere. A Concordance by definition should be informative, all-inclusive and reader-friendly. In sum, Khan's tafsir, notwithstanding some serious shortcomings, represents a substantial addition to the tafsir corpus in English, especially in view of its forceful, inspiring elucidation of the main articles of the Islamic faith.

Publication details of the first edition:
Edited by Farida Khanam. New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2011. pp. 1770. ISBN: 9788179987460

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Qadri, Tahirul Mohammad
The Glorious Quran
(2011)

Born in 1951 in Pakistan, Qadri studied Law there. He is a Sufi and a Pakistani politician as well. He taught constitutional law at the University of the Punjab, Pakistan. He took a bold public stand against terrorism unleashed unjustly in the name of Islam.

The Glorious Quran, the English version of a leading Pakistani Barelvi scholar's work, *Irfan al-Quran* in Urdu, is the fourth Quran interpretation in English representing the Barelvis' understanding of the Quran. The first three were by Hanif Akhtar Fatmi Qadri Naushahi in 1960s, Shah Faridul Haq (1988) and Abdul Majeed Auolakh (1996). These three were essentially the English versions of the *tafsir* in Urdu of the founder of the Barelvi school, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's, *Kanz al-Iman* (1912). With the aim of preserving the Muslims' identity in the subcontinent under attack then from both the British colonialists and aggressive Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century British India, and also from the overwhelming majority of native Hindu Indians, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan (1856-1921) prescribed more emphasis on rituals and an outward display of following Islam, involving religious processions and assembling at shrines.

Tahir-ul Qadri appears wedded unflinchingly to the same Barelvi school in this explanatory translation of the Quran under review. Although it is referred to as the English translation of Qadri's Urdu original, the name of the English translator is not specified. Prefaced to the work is the profile of Qadri (b. 1951) in glowing terms. He is extolled for being the author of 'around one thousand books, a globally renowned jurist, most eminent Islamic scholar and the authority on Islam.' (pp. vi and vii). Strangely enough, nothing is said about the *raison d'être* and distinctive features of

this translation, his sources and his methodology. Appended to the work are only a few *tafsir* notes.

However, since his translation is explanatory, marked by the interpolation of numerous authorial comments into the body of the English translation of the Quranic text, one gains a fairly vivid picture of his mindset and dogmatic preferences.

At places the Quran addresses the Prophet Muhammad as "O Messenger!" or "O Prophet!" For the Barelvis such terms of addressing him seem inadequate, rather disrespectful. This is why Qadri has used the following appellations of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in this work: 'The Venerable (p. 34), O Beloved, (p. 44 passim), O Esteemed Messenger (p. 178), O Esteemed Beloved (p. 235), O Glorious Messenger (p. 314), O Glorious Beloved (p. 343), and 'the Most Beloved and Intimate, and the Perfect Servant' (p. 456). Besides this generous use of honorific titles, Qadri seeks throughout his version to imbue readers with the utmost veneration of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). For example, the Quranic observation that the People of the Book recognize the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in the same way as they can identify their own sons is conveyed thus: '[They] recognize (the Final) Messenger (the Venerable Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, and his glory and majesty)' (Al-Baqarah 2:146, p.34). Likewise, the other non-specific Quranic remark that Allah has raised in rank some Messengers above others is construed by him thus: 'Allah raised some in rank (i.e. elevated the Holy Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, to the highest degrees of the glory of Messengership.)' (Al-Baqarah 2: 253).

The Quranic directive to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to disregard the hypocrites is dressed up thus: '(O Beloved Prophet) turn away your illumined face from them' (al-Nisa' 4: 81, p. 135). The famous ayat al-Nur is likewise rendered with a view to glorifying the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His Light (which is glowing in the world in the form of Muhammad's Light,

blessings and peace be upon him) is as a niche-like (sacred breast) wherein is glowing the lamp (of Prophethood), the lamp contained in a crystal globe (the radiant heart of the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him)." (al-Nur 24:35, p. 585).

The Quranic directive to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) for seeking Allah's forgiveness for his lapses is given this twist: "And ask for the forgiveness for the sins of your *Umma* (community)." (al-Mu'min 40:55, p. 787). In a similar vein is the interpretation of the pointed Quranic reference to his inadvertent lapses and the completion of Allah's blessing upon him and guiding him to the straight way: "So that Allah forgives, for your sake, all the earlier and later sins of your *Umma* ... and may keep your *Umma* firm-footed on the straight path (through your mediation)." (al-Fath 48:2,pp. 853-854). The simple Quranic statement that Allah granted and taught man communication skills is taken to mean that He 'taught the True Messenger *ma kana wa ma yakun* (whatever existed and whatever will come into existence).' (al-Rahman 55:4, p. 894). The Prophet's sighting of the archangel Gabriel on the horizon, as mentioned in the Quran, is overstretched to mean his seeing Allah: "And he has indeed seen (the absolute beauty of the Lord of the Throne) on the effulgent horizon (of the realm of Divinity)." (al-Takwir 81: 23, p.1003). More bewildering is his rendering of the Quranic reference to the Prophet's orphanhood, his seeking guidance and his needfulness: "Did He not find you (compassionate) and provided (in your person) a shelter for orphans? And He found in you (a leader) for a straying people so he provided them guidance (through you). And He found you compassionate and benevolent, then (through you) made the destitute non-liable." (al-Duha 93:6-8, p. 1020)

Furthermore, readers are informed in the Index to this work that as many as twenty Quranic verses prescribe the veneration of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) (p. 1081) and that another eleven verses state that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is well acquainted with the Unseen (*al-ghayb*) (p. 1097). Qadri is also seen trying to sanctify certain notions to which Barelvis subscribe,

as he interpolates these into his explanatory translation of the Quran. Since the Barelivs believe in invoking the dead saints, the Quranic observation that the Prophet (pbuh) cannot make the dead hear the call of the Quran is given this twist: "(O Beloved!) Surely, you make neither the dead (i.e. the disbelievers deprived of the vitality of faith) hear your call..." (al-Naml 27:80, pp. 639-640). For hammering this point, the same is reiterated in explaining al-Rum 30:52 and Fatir 35:32 (pp. 380 and 725 respectively). For reinforcing the notion of saint veneration, readers are told in the Index that the Quran contains more than 70 verses about the "Friends of Allah" (p. 1069). Qadri's hypersensitivity about the Prophet's *ismah* (sinlessness) is so intense that his following note aims at absolving the Prophet Adam (peace and blessings be upon him) of having tasted the forbidden tree: "He did not eat of a particular tree but of another tree of the same kind. He was under the impression that perhaps it was a particular tree which was prohibited and which he abstained from" (p. 526). For the same reason, the Prophet Abrahamis across thus: He said: 'Nay, this biggest (idol) of them would have dire emphatic statement that the biggest idol had broken other idols is put this.' (al-Anbiya' 21: 63, p. 538)

Qadri, as a representative of the Barelvi school, has a strong predilection for *tasawwuf* (Islamic mysticism). At places, the same surfaces in his Quran translation. For example, the Prophet's mandate as teacher, conferred upon him by the Quran, is spelled out in the following terms of reference laden with mysticism: "The Prophet teaches you the Book and inculcates in you logic and wisdom and enlightens you (on the mysteries of spiritual gnosis and divine truth) which you did not know." (Al-Baqarah 2: 151, p. 35). Also, the Index identifies scores of Quranic verses which, according to him, focus on "gnosis" and "spiritual excellence" (pp. 1070 and 1094). Likewise, Khidr in Surah al-Kahf is introduced as an elite servant who possessed the inspired knowledge of 'secrets and gnostics' (p. 490).

Qadri also appears to be fascinated with the scientific concepts and terms of the day. He is often found reading these in various Quranic

verses. That Allah created man from clay is given this quasi-scientific touch: “And indeed, We originated man’s (chemical) genesis from that dry sounding clay which, (first) having grown old (and under the heat of the sun and other chemical and biological effects), had turned into black stinking mud.” (al-Hijr 15:26, p. 424).

Similarly, the birds’ flight, another sign of Allah’s creative power, is explained away with reference, once again, to scientific jargon: “Have they not seen the birds that fly aloft in the air (under the law of motion and aerodynamics)?” (al-Nahl 16: 79, p. 445). Allah’s creation of seven paths is described along the same lines: “And surely We have created above you seven paths (i.e. magnetic paths or fields, around the vast atmospheric expanse of the planet earth for the safeguard of the cosmic system).” (al-Mu’minun 23:17, pp. 563-564)

It is bewildering to note recurrent references to scientific terms in his Index, asserting that numerous Quranic verses were sent down to promote these scientific concepts: Aerodynamics (p. 1054), the evolution of the universes in six periods (p. 1068), the grativational collapse of the universe (p. 1070), light year (p. 1078), magnetic fields (p. 1079), the laws of physics, nuclear physics, solar expansion and navigation (p.1086), primordial explosion (p. 1087), sub-atomic particles (1095) and the theory of relativity (p. 1096). Needless to add, the Quran is basically a book of guidance for all times and places and has never claimed to be a book of science. The Quran is not opposed to science, and its teachings urge man to explore all that is around him. While taking a cue from its spirit of inquisitiveness and enquiry, early Muslims advanced a great deal the frontiers of knowledge, including those of the natural sciences and medicine. However, reading current scientific concepts in the Quranic text is not a desirable exercise.

Notwithstanding Qadri’s high sounding credentials as an Islamic scholar, the following instances of the mistranslation of the Quranic text mar his work. For example, the Quranic exhortation for the remembrance of Allah appears in a quasi-mystical fashion: “These

are the people who, remembering Allah, remain standing (as the epitome of submissiveness, sitting (as reverence incarnate), and (also keep) changing sides (in discomfort of love) and mediate on (the manifest luster of His Eminence and Beauty at work in) the creation of the heavens and the earth. (Then, acquainted with the pleasure of His gnosis, they call spontaneously)..." (Ali Imran 3: 191, pp. 112-113)

Qadri's authorial additions in parentheses in the above Quranic passage tend to make it largely unintelligible for readers not familiar with mysticism. Likewise, he brands the Messengers, the truthful, martyrs and the pious as "spiritual dignitaries" (p. 131). In Verse 35 of al-Anam Allah tells the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) not to bother much about the unbelievers' rejection of truth, and be not one of *al-jahilin* (the ignorant). However, Qadri's rendering invests this verse with a totally different slant: "So (owing to the overwhelming enthusiasm generating from your compassion, kindness and concern) do not be unaware (of their ill fortune)." (al-Anam 6: 35, pp. 202-203)

For him, *al-qital* (fighting in the way of Allah) stands only for "defensive war" (al-Tawbah 9:43; p. 307). Throughout he presents Azar as the Prophet Abraham's uncle (al-Tawbah 9:114, p. 325), though the Quran specifically speaks of him as his father. According to Qadri, "the real father of the Prophet Ibrahim was Tarakh who was neither a disbeliever nor a polytheist. He was rather a believer in the true *Din* (Religion). Azar was in fact Ibrahim's uncle who brought him up after his father's demise and was called his father figuratively." (Ibrahim 4:41, p. 418). Qadri does not cite any source in support of his above contention. In Surah Yusuf, the Quran refers to a witness whose ruling helped establish the Prophet Joseph's innocence and the guilt of the Aziz's wife. For reasons best known to him, Qadri insists that this witness was an infant! (Yusuf 12:26, p. 381). Once again, no source is indicated which might substantiate this miracle. Another innovation on Qadri's part is his identification of some Quranic allusions by name and mentioning these names in the body of the

Quran translation. Readers are thus made to believe that these names occur in the text itself. Granted that some of these names may figure in Hadith reports on *asbab al-nuzul* (the occasion of revelation) of the relevant verses. However, care should be exercised in inserting any extra-Quranic material into the body of the Quranic text itself. For example, names of four Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) appear in his translation of Verse 63 of Surah Saad and they are branded as "sold to-God divines" (p. 762). The Aziz's wife is named Zulaykhah throughout his translation of Surah Yusuf. True, her name is fairly common in popular reports, yet its placement in the Quran text strikes a jarring note. Even the Khawarij, who appeared on the scene much after the Prophet's demise, are identified as the persons referred to in Al-Baqarah 2:11-12; al-Rad 13:25, al-Kahf 18:103-104 and Fatir 35:8 (p. 1076). Qadri does not provide any note either to justify this anachronism.

The level of English and presentation in Qadri's work is fairly good. It does not suffer from the shortcomings which usually vitiate the works in English by Muslims originating from the Indo-Pak subcontinent. However, it is not free from errors, including some typographical ones. Some instances of unhappy, unidiomatic usage and typos are: "Godwariness" in place of piety (*taqwa*) (p. 180 and elsewhere); "He holds strayed whom He wills," rather than "He lets go astray whom He wills" (p. 448); "man may see to his helplessness" (p. 444); "wisdom-loaded values" (p. 462); "theeophanies" (p. 884) "adultry" (p. 1054), the murder of Coptic" instead of "the murder of the Copt" (p. 1064); "som" (p. 1083) and "prophibition" (p. 1087).

Qadri's work, nonetheless, has some redeeming features. His elucidation of *fasad fi'l-ard* enumerates "terrorism and massacre amongst Muslims" (p. 170) as well, which points to his alertness to today's ground realities in his own country, Pakistan, and in the post-9/11world. He does well to offer his simple, easy to follow definition of Free Will and the perennial presence of the forces of evil in the world created by Allah: "Having distinguished the truth

from falsehood and having communicated the consequences of them both, Allah provides everyone the opportunity to choose his way freely in order that every individual is held accountable for his doings, liable for reward and punishment accordingly." (al-Anam 6:149, p. 231).

Unlike most of other English translators, his rendering of Verse 9 of al- Oariah testifies to his fine understanding of the needs and comprehension level of his target readership. For, in this and other instances he does not rest content with offering only a narrow, literal translation of the Arabic idiom which often leaves English-speaking readers perplexed. Although his explanatory notes are not many, he has compensated this with his usually helpful parenthetical comments in the body of the translation. More importantly, he has ably filled the gaps arising out of the ellipsis and allusions in the Quranic text. His paraphrase-like translation goes a long way in conveying fully the message and meaning of the Quran to readers. Take the following as illustrative. Verse 223 of Al-Baqarah about man-woman relationship is generally translated thus: "Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your "tilth, al-Hilali and Khan, *The Noble Quran*, p. 45). "Your wives are your tilth; go, then, into your tilth." (Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding the Quran*, p. 68). "Your wives are as tilth; so approach your tilth, (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran*, p. 88). "Your women are a tilth for you (to cultivate) so go to your tilth," (M. M. Pickthall, *The Holy Quran*, p. 38). In a contrast to these largely incomprehensible renderings, especially owing to the use of the archaic word, "tilth," Qadri's following version of the same is refreshing and instantly intelligible: "Your wives are for you like a harvest-producing field. So go to your field as you may desire." (Al-Baqarah 2: 223, p. 53). Qadri's intelligent and perceptive grappling with the Word of God in order to derive divine guidance regarding current issues and challenges is evident from his Index, signifying his attempt to relate several Quranic verses with such concerns as "Jihad in order to eliminate terrorism" (p. 1076), "militancy" (p. 1081), "human resources" (p. 1073), "controlling anger" (p. 1056), "business ethics" (p. 1062), "cheerfulness" (p. 1063), "constructive

reasoning" (p.1063), "developing social coherence" (p. 1066) "environment" (p. 1067), "human dignity" (p. 1073), "Jihad against (the base) self (p. 1075), "large heartedness" (p.1077) "protection of human race" (p. 1087), "rights of minorities, the disabled, and senior citizens" (p. 1091) "spreading peace" (p. 1094), and "dignity of women" (p. 1098). It is a pity that he has not elucidated these. His discussion on these issues, which are of immense relevance not only to Muslims but also to the entire humanity, would have enhanced the value of this work. Appended to the work is a useful note on "The excellent etiquettes and virtues of the recitation of the Quran" (pp. 1043-1045). This note is based on authentic Ahadith, and bears out Qadri's thorough grounding in the primary Islamic sources.

Publication details of the first edition:

London, Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, 2011, pp. 1102, ISBN: 9871908229007

51
International Saheeh
The Quran: English Meanings and Notes
(2012)

Brought out by a *dawah* organization, Al-Muntada Al-Islami, Saudi Arabia, this English translation of the Quran caters well to the needs of Muslims and non-Muslims who are interested in learning what Islamic faith (*aqidah*) is. To be precise, this work states clearly the mainstream Islamic stance which is in accordance with the beliefs of *Ahl Al-Sunnah wal-Jamah.* In pursuance of the same, it lets the Quranic text speak for itself, supplemented by brief explanatory notes. At places, apt Ahadith are cited in order to amplify the Quranic viewpoint.

The most valuable element of this work is that the readers gain a fairly clear and comprehensive picture of the articles of Islamic faith, including the concept and attributes of Allah and the seminal doctrines of *tawhid* (Allah's Oneness), *risalah* (Messengership), and *akhirah* (the Afterlife). This authentic account of things Islamic is, in the words of Ibn Taiymiah, free from any *tahrif* (distortion), *tatil* (denial), *takyif* (hazarding a guess), and *tamthil* (anthromorphism). In the same vein is the insightful introduction to the Quran (pp. v-vii). Readers are clearly told that on studying the Quran, they will find out a) how their Creator has described Himself, b) the purpose of their life on earth, c) consequences of their actions, and d) how they should relate to Allah and fellow human beings in the spirit of *ihsan* (excellent conduct).

The exposition of *asma al-husna* (names and attributes of Allah) features on pp. 790, 806-807 and 928. The translators have done well to explain these succinctly while conveying very fine shades of meaning and distinction in some of the seemingly identical names. Throughout, the brief notes guide readers about the intent and thrust of various Quranic terms, concepts, and allusions. At times, however, the description tends to be somewhat vague and

unspecific. For example, Baal (Verse 125 of Al-Saffat) is introduced merely as "the name of a great idol worshipped by the people" (p. 645). Time and place specification in the context of Baal would have made the above note more meaningful. Likewise, the misperceptions about womankind, as reported in Verse 18 of Al-Zukhruf should have been ascribed clearly to the Arab polytheists. Furthermore, the translation of this particular verse, unlike all others, is convoluted, rather unfathomable. For it reads as follows: "So is one brought up in ornaments while being during conflict unevident [attributed to Allah]?" (pp. 705-706). It should better read: "(Do they ascribe to Allah) one who is brought up with(the habit of using) jewellery and who cannot make herself clear in disputes (referring to daughters)" (Mufti Afzal Hoosen Elias, *The Quran Made Easy*, p. 904).

The overall level of the English translation is fairly good and conveys the essential message and meaning of the Quran. Take the following as illustrative:

> Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense? For that is the one who drives away the orphan, and does not encourage the feeding of the poor. So woe to those who pray [but] who are heedless of their prayer; those who make show [of their deeds), and withhold [simple] assistance.
>
> (Al-Maun, 107:1-7, p. 923)

> Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent."

2018 explanatory notes, a brief account of the merits of particular Surahs and Verses, and exhaustive Index are some other valuable features of this work. In sum, it stands out as a substantial work which remarkably succeeds in advancing readers' knowledge about the Quranic belief system and guidance.

Publication details of the first edition:

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust, 2012, pp. 964. ISBN: 97860390196-4-6

52
Itani, Talal
The Quran: Translated to English
(2012)

Born in 1961 in Lebanon, Talal Itani is an electronic engineer by profession. In 1980s he emigrated to the USA. After his self-study he embarked upon the venture of translating the Quran into modern English.

It is hard to say what prompted Talal Itani to produce his English rendering of the Quran. For, this work is without any preface, explanatory notes, appendixes or even an index, which may shed some light on his mindset. At the outset of the work, however, one comes across this brief, ambivalent statement: "Talal Itani first read the Quran in 1992, *in order to discredit it*. Since then Talal has been studying the Quran, researching it, and teaching it to others. Talal decided to translate the Quran when he gave up all hope of finding an English translation that is at the same time highly accurate, and very easy to read." (Inside title page).

The above italicized portion is intriguing. For, on studying this work, it is gratifying to note that it does not discredit the Quran in the least. On the contrary, it reiterates the divine origin, miraculous inimitability and universality of the Quran. Most probably after having studied the Quran, Itani underwent a change of heart, and since then has been serving the cause of the Quran. For it is, one the whole, a faithful rendering of the Quran in simple English.

However, notwithstanding his claim of "researching" over the years, no fruit of his Quranic scholarship is evident from this work. In the absence of any explanatory notes, it is difficult to figure out how can an English translation guide uninitiated readers? For the work under review does not tell readers what kind of a book the Quran is, its distinctive features, its subject matter and themes and its several geo-historical allusions and places. On reading this work, readers do not gain any idea about the articles of Islamic

faith, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the Islamic value system, Shariah, and the persons, places and things referred to in the Quran. Needless to add, readers do stand in need of some basic background and contextual information. Otherwise, they cannot make any sense out of the following renderings by Itani:

(a) Postponement is an increase in disbelief - by which those who disbelieve are led astray. (al-Tawbah 9:37, p.79)

(b) What drove you into Saqar? (al-Qiyamah 75:42, p. 258)

(c) As two receivers receive, seated to the right and the left. (Qaf 50:17, p.227)

That the above Quranic statements are related to a) the pagan Arabs' practice of *nasi*' (the intercalation of sacred months); b) Hell, of which one of the names is *Saqar* and c) the two recording angels, should have been specified. Without such clues, the above passages can hardly be comprehended.

Although Itani's translation is mostly close to the original, it is marred, at places, by instances of mistranslation. Take the following as illustrations (the inaccuracy is italicised and its correct version appears within parentheses below):

(a) He said, "My Lord, since You have lured me away, *I will glamorize* for them on earth," [I will make things on earth appealing to them] (al-Hijr 15:39, p.109)

(b) *His is the mystery of the heavens* and the earth. By Him, you see and hear. [With Him is (the knowledge of) the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. How clearly He sees; how clearly He hears!] (al-Kahf 18:26, p.124)

(c) We gave Abraham his *integrity formerly,* [We had bestowed wisdom upon Abraham earlier] (al-Anbiya' 21:51, p.139)

Such blemishes apart, Itani's translation is not, at least, disfigured by pernicious instances of whimsical opinions, which is so refreshing especially in view of many such other forays.

Publication details of the first edition:

Dallas, US, Clear Quran, 2012. pp. 275. ISBN: 97814679487466.

53
Peachy, Daoud William S. and Al-Johani, Maneh Hammad
The Quran: The Final Book of God: A Clear English Translation of the Glorious Quran
(2012)

The publication of yet another English translation of the Quran by these two Muslim scholars seems gratifying in that it is a collaborative work by Daoud Peachy, an American academician who embraced Islam in 1981, and Maneh al-Johani, a Saudi scholar. They were assisted by several reviewers and editors (p. ix). One naturally assumes that it will be an authentic, presentable translation which will facilitate a better understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran, especially among the English speaking readers who do not have access to the Quran in Arabic. It is a pity that its study shatters all of these illusions. Even the circumstantial setting as described by these two authors for producing this translation, in the face of the easy availability of scores of English translations, is unconvincing, nay even somewhat unethical: "The starting point of this project was Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall's *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (1930). It was chosen as a basis because he was deemed to have fewer controversial ideas on the Quran than other translators... Indeed the original mandate of this project was precisely, to eliminate the Biblical English and modernize the vocabulary [in Pickthall's work]" (p. ix). This intent of the translators is problematic on more than more count. First, it is deplorable to revise someone's work posthumously. Both morally and legally it is untenable to rewrite Pickthall's work 80 years after its publication. How distasteful it is to attribute those views to a writer to which he did not subscribe and of which he was ignorant! Moreover, since Pickthall's work is devoid of any interpretation of

things Quranic, it is factually incorrect to state that in comparison to others he is less "controversial." What is most ironic is that notwithstanding these translators' claim of having eventually produced "a new translation" (p. xi), it is still largely a replica of Pickthall's dated work. The quantum of heavy borrowings from Pickthall's is evident from the following instances:

(1) Introductions to all 114 Quranic Surahs have been bodily lifted, though with minor editing, from Pickthall's 1930 edition.

(2) The translation of the Quranic text too, is taken mainly from Pickthall's. Take the following as illustrative;

(a) There is not an animal on earth, or a flying creature flying on two wings, but they are peoples like unto you. We have neglected nothing in the Book (of Our decrees). Then unto their Lord they will be gathered. Those who deny Our revelations are deaf and dumb in darkness. Whom Allah will, He sendeth astray, and whom He will, He places on a straight path. (Al-An'am 6:38-39, Pickthall's translation).

There is not an animal on earth, nor a bird flying on its two wings, but that they form communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book. Then to their Lord they will be gathered. Those who reject Our signs are deaf and dumb in darkness. Whomever God wills, He sends astray, and whomever He wills, He places on a straight path. (Al-An'am 6:38-39, Peachey's and al-Johani's translation, p. 78)

(b) And when she heard of their sly talk, she sent for them and prepared for them a cushioned couch (to lie on at the feast) and gave to every one of them a knife and said (to Joseph): Come out unto them! And when they saw him, they exalted him and cut their hands, exclaiming. Allah Blameless! This is not a human being. This is no other than some gracious angel! (Yusuf 12:31, Pickthall's translation)

And when she heard of their sly talk, she sent for them, prepared them couches and gave every one of them a knife.

And she told (Joseph): "Come out to them!" And when they saw him, they admired him and cut their hands, saying: "God save us! This is not a human being. This is no other than some gracious angel." (Yusuf 12:31, Peachey's and al-Johani's translation, p. 113)

(c) Thankful for His bounties, He chose him and He guided him unto a straight path. And We gave him good in the world, and in the Hereafter he is among the righteous. And afterward We inspired thee (Muhammad, saying): Follow the religion of Abraham, as one by nature upright. He was not of the idolators. (Al-Nahl 16:121-123, Pickthall's translation)

He was thankful for His blessings. (God) chose him and guided him to a straight path. And We gave him good in This World, and in the Hereafter, he is indeed among the righteous. And then We inspired you (Muhammad), "Follow the religion of Abraham, the upright, for he was not among the pagans." (Al-Nahl 16:121-123, Peachy's and Al-Johani's translation, p. 170)

(d) And say: Ah, woe for us! This is the Day of Judgement. This is the Day of Separation which ye used to deny. (And it is said unto the angels): Assemble those who did wrong, together with their wives and what they used to worship. (Al-Saffat 37:20-22, Pickthall's translation)

And say, Woe to us! This is the Day of Judgement. This is the Day of Decision, which you used to deny. (They will be told): "Gather those who did wrong with their fellows and what they used to worship." (Al-Saffat 37:20-22, Peachey's and Al-Johani's translation, p. 293)

(e) They say: Surely if we return to Al-Madinah, the mightier will soon drive out the weaker; when might belonged to Allah and to His Messenger and the believers; but the hypocrites know not. O ye who believe! Let not your wealth nor your children distract you from remembrance

> of Allah. Those who do so, they are the losers. (Al-Munafiqun 63:8-9, Pickthall's translation)

They say: "If we returned to Medina, the mighty would drive out the lowly." Might belongs to God, His Messenger and believers, but the hypocrites do not know. You who have believed, do not let your wealth or your children distract you from remembering God. And whoever does so, these are the losers. (Al-Munafiqun 63:8-9, Peachy's and Al-Johani's translation, p. 386)

The present translation thus hardly qualifies as a "new" one. At best, it is a simplified rehashing of Pickthall's. However, it is inexplicable why was this done? For, 16 years ago this very job was successfully accomplished by Arafat K. El-Ashi: his Revised edition of Pickthall's *Meaning of the Glorious Quran* (Beltsville, USA, Amana, 1996) presents in modern, standard English a simple version of Pickthall's.

The present translators' original contribution, nonetheless, consists in their 406 extremely brief notes, two valuable Appendixes, a long Bibliography and user friendly thematic Indexes. Since most of the notes are one-liners or banal, these do not bring out the Quranic worldview, its value system and its eternal guidance for readers. A work purportedly on the Quran should familiarize readers with the Quranic teachings and commands about all aspects of individual and collective life. It is a pity that some of these explanatory notes are unhelpful, even flawed. Take the following as illustrative:

(i) "The [murdered] man came back to life and revealed his murderer." (Fn. 10, p.11). Bereft of any specific, hard information, this note tells readers nothing Nor does it even hint at the miracle which is associated with this incident.

(ii) The use of "Move" and "Movers" for *hijrah* (the Prophet Muhammad's migration) and *muhajirun* (the Prophet Muhammad's Makkan Companions who had migrated to Madina) obliterates the historical thrust of these important Islamic terms. (Fns. 46,70,105 and 114; pp. 41, 56, 114, 119 and 343).

(iii) The assertion that "Verses 90 and 91 of Al-Nahl have been recited at the end of weekly sermons in all Sunni congregations" (Fn. 152, pp. 167-168) is marred by three factual mistakes: a) The correct reference is to the Sermon recited before Friday prayer and hence "weekly sermon" is non-specific. b) Only Verse 90 is recited as part of the Friday sermon. c) It features in the Friday sermon in both Sunni and Shia congregations.

(iv) The Quranic allusion to Aaron, in Verse 28 of Maryam is explained thus: "The Aaron mentioned here is not the brother of Moses." (Fn. 176, p. 190). Nothing is said about the identity of the person under discussion. Moreover, while mentioning the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), the omission of the honorific formula, "Peace be upon him" is regrettable.

(v) Equally unhelpful, rather confusing for readers is this explanatory note: "The word "Al-Zakah" is translated as "poor-tax," in the context of Messenger Muhammad." (Fn. 177, p. 190). The above note makes no sense. Moreover, since the verse under discussion pertains to Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), the translators' reference to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is incomprehensible. Furthermore, once again, the Prophet Muhammad's name appears without the usual honorific formula. This omission strikes all the more jarring note in a work on the Quran published by an acclaimed Islamic body functioning in Saudi Arabia (Other instances of this non-observance are pp. iii, v, vii, viii, 52, 101, 105, 169, 176, 245, 274, 276, 300, 301, 344, 360, 362, 383, 405, 425 and 443).

(vi) The following note being too brief betrays unintentional disrespect and unfairness to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him): "Verse 20:40 states that Moses had killed a man in Egypt ... Egyptians held it as a crime against him... Pharaoh blames Moses for it, and Moses admits he was in the wrong..." (Fn. 210, p. 245). It must have been clarified that

the killing was an inadvertent act on his part and that he had repented. Once again, the Prophet Moses's name occurs without any appellation or honorific formula.

(vii) The attempt at determining some pronouns in Verse 9 of Al-Rum culminates into making these pitiably convoluted, unintelligible statements: "They" are "those who were before" and "them" to the disbelievers of the Prophet's time. In the last two sentences, "their," "them," and "they" refer to "those who were before." (Fn. 226 pp. 263-264). It is doubtful that the above note will help readers in any way.

(viii) The use of atrocious English has obscured the translation/ meaning of these two verses:

> And they lay (the fathering of) part of His worshipers to Him…
>
> And if one of them has had any news of what he has stuck on the Gracious one. (Al-Zukhruf 43: 15 and 17, p. 327)

(xi) Likewise, it is almost impossible to grasp the purport of this outlandish note: "From the mention of Moses, some commentators have suggested that these jinn were foreign (i.e. non-Arab) Jews." (Fn. 283, p. 340)

It is hard to think of such varieties of jinn as "foreign," "non-Arab" or even Jew!

(x) The explanation that the Arabic expression "*fadhraba' l-rikaaba* freely means "fight" (Fn. 284, p. 341) is more likely to perplex readers. The above transliteration too, leaves much to be desired.

(xi) While commenting on "the ten nights" referred to in Verse 2 of Al-Fajr, the translators, after toying with its several interpretations, reach this unhelpful conclusion: "It is not clear to what the phrase "ten nights" refers." (Fn. 385, p. 435).

(xii) Another reprehensible instance of fuzzy explanatory notes in this work is: "Archaeologists now believe that they have

found the ancient city of Iram in the Arabian desert." (Fn. 386, p. 435). The absence of any answer to the basic questions (who, when and where) about the excavated town of Iram is irksome.

The work suffers from several typographical errors, unidiomatic expressions, and unacceptable usage (pp. 35, 36, 41, 44, 51, 99, 179, 187, 195, 209, 254, 294 and 422). The absence of the Quranic text is another major shortcoming in this work. Equally irritating is the total absence of the Arabic titles of Quranic Surahs. The work is devoid also of the running Surah/Verse nos. at the head of pages, which is reader unfriendly. The writers' knowledge of the English translations of the Quran is out of date. Their main source is the Quran translations Bibliography published in 1986. Their thorough grounding in the Islamic faith and practices, however, shines through their two Appendixes on *Sirah* and the message of Islam respectively (pp. 458-464). This overview of things Islamic should be of much help to those new to the Quran/Islam. Their Bibliography (pp. 467-476), however, reveals their poor academic judgement. For, it includes titles on French, Persian and Turkish dictionaries, several English dictionaries and thesauruses, a Qadyani English translation of the Quran and many irrelevant titles. Readers will nonetheless benefit much from the extensive Index, listing the names of Prophets, groups, angels, tribes, places and mountains, and concepts, terms and subjects mentioned in the Quran.

In sum, it is a disappointing work, though undertaken by well-meaning authors.

Publication details of the first edition:

Qassim, Saudi Arabia, World Assembly of Muslim Youth, 2012. pp. 476+59. ISBN (not stated).

54
Chaudry, Ijaz
Quran Translation: The Latest and Most Modern Translation of the Quran
(2013)

In late 1970s an Egyptian apostate, Rashad Khalifa (1935-1990) gained notoriety on account of his writings, claiming the presence of a mathematical structure in the Quran based on the number 19. At that time computer was something fascinating, especially for the naive Muslim readership. Khalifa made such tall claims in his work, *The Computer Speaks* (1980): "Secret code of the Quran decoded." While riding high on the wave of frentic public support he received in view of reports about his skillful use of computer technology for vindicating the truth of the Quran, Khalifa produced his English translation: *The Quran: The Final Scripture -The Authorized Version* (1978). However, the contents of this work were atrocious, nay blasphemous, He rejected the institution of *risalah* (Prophethood) and entire Hadith corpus. In his work he analysed the numeric value of Quranic words with the help of computer and concluded that their numeric value always corresponds to the mathematical number 19. He had the audacity to brand Verses 128-129 of Surah Al-Tawbah as forged on the basis of his flimsy no. 19 theory. At a later date, he claimed that he was the Final Messenger as he dismissed Prophet Muhammad's finality as Allah's Seal of Prophets. In investing the number 19 with unwarranted halo, Khalifa toed the line of Bahaullah Mirza, the founder of Bahaism. It is Bahai belief that the figure 19 is the central core of the universe and also of the whole cosmic system. A host of Muslim scholars exposed Khalifa's blasphemy, namely Anis Ahmad, A. V. Denffer, Bilal Philips and especially Mahmood Y. Abdullah in his *Tampering with the Text and Meaning of the Quran* (2005).

Inexplicably enough, even after the demolition of Khalifa's hoax and apostasy some 30 years ago, Ijaz Chaudry has indulged in the same blasphemy by parroting Khalifa's obnoxious notions. Throughout he employs "the Miracle of 19," endorses Khalifa's outrageous comments and, at places, even outdoes Khalifa. Take these assertions as an instance in point, though it is agonizing to reproduce these. At the end verse 127 of Surah Al-Tawbah he avers:

> The disbelievers have added two false verses 128 and 129. In these verses Muhammad is described as merciful. (p.113)

Verse 107 of Surah Al-Anbiya proclaims that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is "sent by Allah as mercy to the people of the whole world." Even in the face of this unmistakable Quranic declaration Chaudry has the cheek to distort its meaning beyond recognition:

> The disbelievers have made an issue from this verse and gave Muhammad a status of god. (p. 190).

Speaking of all Muslims as "disbelievers," contesting Prophet Muhammad's mercy, and accusing Muslims of idolizing the Prophet (peace be upon him) betray the height of recklessness and wickedness.

Worse, he parades himself as a Messenger of God, named al-Muzzammil, and demands the believers' oath of fealty:

This verse (22 of Al-Ahzab) sets precedence for today's followers to follow God and His Messenger Al-Muzzammil (p. 247).

In a similar vein, he thunders:

> Most of today's Muslims believe that Muhammad was infallible. However, when you read the Quran, you will find that all Messengers are human and as for being human has human frailties such as making mistakes. Muhammad the Messenger is asked to stay within the law of God, and this might be an issue with disbelievers who worship Muhammad (pp. 248 and 249).

Verse 45 of Saba states that the unbelieving Arabs of the Prophet's day do not possess even one-tenth of what Allah had granted to earlier unbelieving communities. However, this plenty did not defend the latter against divine punishment. Chaudry gives this readily comprehensible Quranic verse the following bizarre twist:

> The mention of "one-tenth" in this verse is talking about the generation at Muhammad's time when that generation is compared against the generation at Rashad Khalifa's time who had seen one-tenth more of the miracle of 19. And the generation of Al-Muzzamil today has seen one-tenth miracle more than what had been seen by Rashad's people. That is because at Muhammad's time there were no computer and the calculations had to be done by hand and at Rashad's time there were computers. At Al-Muzzamils (sic) time the Miracle of 19 was refined and used copiously, things like Position, Level, and Temporal connections were incorporated into the Miracle of 19 also Calculcus and Group Theory was also taken into account. (p. 255).

All this is mind boggling. What have "Position Level, Temporal Connections, Calculus and Group Theory" to do with the explanation of a Quranic verse?

Chaudry unabashedly lays his claim to be God's Messenger:

> …every nation must receive a warner. Dr. Rashad Khalifa came to USA while Al-Muzzammil came to UK, two different nations... Al-Muzzammil appears as historical figure, because this decision was done (sic) long time ago. This is true for all Messengers i.e. they are sent to different nations. Al-Muzzammil is the last messenger... English being universal language (sic) England is the final nation who received the messenger. Rashad was sent to America and their English(sic) and Al-Muzzamil to UK and their English(sic). (p. 258).

These convoluted rantings bring to mind similar earlier scandalous claims made by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), a false claimant to Prophethood.

Some of his idiotic interpretations are: a) Prophet Abraham's dream about sacrificing his son "was from Satan" (p. 266). b) Verse 34 of

Surah Al-Nisa about disobedient wives is interpreted with reference to the women suffering from hysteria which in his opinion stems from their "long term non-sexual activity." (p. 51). c) His translation of the opening verse of Surah al-Sharh, "Did We not cool your (the Prophet's) temper?" is followed by this audacious comment: "Muhammadans think that Muhammad was perfect and that he was never angry or sinned. It seems like all Messengers have a problem with their temper." (p. 367) d) His explanation of Surah Quraysh in terms of the unification of Quraysh with the children of Israel, and his assertion that "Arabs are the children of Israel," which leads him to this credulous conclusion: "If they unify, the Israel will not interfere in Palestine and there would be peace." (p. 371).

Equally outrageous is his comment that Surah Al-Adiyat "confirms the Iraq war" because "the convoy of trucks and tanks in the Iraq war raised dust clouds." (pp.369 and 370).

Not content with such disfiguring of the meaning and message of the Quran, Chaudry also makes some other outlandish claims: Verse 11 of Surah Ha Mim al-Sajdah "confirms the discovery of Higgs Mechanism as part of the CERN project in 2013; Verse 5 of Surah Al-Jathiyah predates the Coriollis Effect related to the movement of winds in the stratosphere and Verse 35 of Surah Al-Rahman foretells the launching of Voyager I and II."

One cannot have even pity for such a pathetic, vile work, abusing the rubric of an English translation of the Quran.

Publication details of the first edition:

Ijazchaudry19@gmail.com, 2013. pp. 373. ISBN: 978-1-291-50967.

55
Islahi, Sayyid Hamed Alkaff
The Simplified Quran
(2013)

This translator of Arab descent was born and brought up in India. He introduces himself as a disciple of Hameeduddin Farahi, Syed Abul Ala Mawdudi and Syed Qutb (p.ix). These 20th century *mufassirun* stand out for their sterling contribution to the Quran interpretation. Farahi is acclaimed for propounding his theory of *nazm* (coherence) in the Quran, which was expanded by his student, Ameen Ahsan Islahi (1904-1997) in his Urdu *tafsir*, *Tadabbur-i Quran*. For them all Quranic Surahs and verses are thematically interrelated. Syed Mawdudi (1903-1979) won accolades for his Urdu *tafsir*, *Tafheem Al-Quran* and scores of other seminal works, particularly on *ilm al-kalam* (scholasticism). His works succeed remarkably in projecting Islam as a complete way of life, guiding humanity in all spheres of activities. He is perceived as a proponent of political Islam, a trait which he shares with the Egyptian *mufassir*, Syed Qutb Shaheed (1906-1966). His Arabic *tafsir, Fi Zilal Al-Quran*, translated into English entitled as *In the Shade of the Quran*, denounces the present day materialistic, hedonistic way of life which he brands as *Jahiliyyah* (ignorance of the pre-Islamic era). So Al-Kaff Islahi's ideologues are somewhat diverse and his commentary on the Quran represents an amalgam of their views.

Far from providing notes on a range of Quranic terms, concepts and persons, he offers a sustained commentary on chunks of Quranic verses which he construes as thematically identical. For example, Surah Al-Baqarah is divided by him into several sections, generally of 10 verses each, followed by his paraphrasing of their subject matter and their brief analysis. A summary of each Surah is appended as conclusion. He should have better prefixed each surah with his introduction which could mentally prepare readers better for gaining acquaintance with the subsequent contents of the

Quran. Moreover, unlike his mentor Farahi, there is not attempt on his part to bring out the linkage in various groups of verses analysed by him. He offers a rehash of the Quranic text in his own words. Regrettably, his exposition is couched in clumsy even incomprehensible and outlandish English owing to the lack of his proficiency in English grammar, syntax, usage and idiom. Some pitiable instances in point are:

a) "The long verbal battle by Allah against the Children of Israel is still continuing" (p.36)

b) "…they didn't hesitate to kill the prophets who brought things" (p.36)

c) "That was the past which continued" (p.36)

d) "…it was revealed upon their own prophets or a prophet from among their cousins." (p.36)

e) "…a poisonous crop of the double anger from Allah" (p.36)

f) "When they asked to believe in the Prophet Muhammad and in the Quran, they say" (p.36)

g) "…persecuted in very bloody persecutions" (p.36)

h) "Allah Almighty always create circumstances." (p.57)

i) "If the believers patiently bear these loses" (p.58)

It is a pity that notwithstanding Islahi's pious yet tall claims to have produced his translation which captures "the real spirit of the Quran and its message," which is "the first ever translation and commentary written on coherence basis" and which seeks "to apply Quranic principles on the contemporary world and situations" (p.ix), his work delivers none of these.

The work suffers also from the lack of any material introducing the Quran, Sirah and early Islamic history which could serve as a context for approaching the translation of the Quran in a better equipped way. Nor does it have any glossary or Index. Equally difficult it is to endorse his claim of his work qualifying as the "Simplified Quran." The following instances, betraying long

winded, convoluted sentences may be largely unintelligible for readers:

i. "When Allah took covenant/Oath have [sic] given a book [sic] and wisdom to you [sic], thenafter [sic]" (Ali Imran 3:81, p.153)

ii. "O Believers! Do not perform the prayer… while you are defiladed" [sic] (Al-Nisa 4:43, 215)

iii. "The hypocrites are afraid of a Surah being revealed upon [sic) them which inform [sic] them …Allah will surely bring out what from [sic] they are afraid of." (Al-Tawbah 9:64, p.387)

Unfortunately, this translation leaves much to be desired. Islahi's pious intentions are not matched by his contribution.

Details of the first edition:
Good Tree Publications, Hyderabad, India, Pp.959. 2013.

56
Kidwai, Abdur Raheem
What is in the Quran? Message of the Quran in Simple English
(2013)

I

By Tauseef Ahmad Parray

Abdur Raheem Kidwai - who has obtained higher degrees in English from both Aligarh Muslim University and University of Leicester, UK - is a well-known author of many works on the Quran and Islam. He has published extensively on the English translations of the Quran (in various forms: books, articles, review essays, reviews, etc.), literary Orientalism, English studies and Urdu literature. The work under review is actually an extension of his previous work(s) especially his *Daily Wisdom: Selections from the Holy Quran (2011)*, which consists of 'selected' verses of the Quran, of 365 passages, covering the whole year, engaging the reader in a moment of daily reflection. It attempts to set out the "meaning and message of the Quran in simple, understandable English for the general reader, Muslim or non-Muslim alike" (p.vii).

Kidwai being a prolific author and researcher on the Quran and Quranic studies and translations especially-is well-aware, and of course points out as well, that around 70 complete English translations of the Quran are currently available. But they are addressed, he claims on the basis of his experience of "having reviewed since 1985 around 70 translations of the Quran" (p. xi) mostly over and over again - to more specialist readerships, presupposing and taking for granted some background knowledge of comparative religion, theology, history, geography, and of Quranic Arabic terms. The present work rather than presenting a literal (actual and exact) translation of the Quran, presents and

paraphrases, as the sub-title of the work reveals, the *"Meaning of the Quran in Simple English"* - or in an uncomplicated, unsophisticated and unfussy, easy, simple and straightforward English, while striving to retain its original message. This translation, without the Quranic text in Arabic, is preceded by a "Preface" (pp. ix-xii), wherein Kidwai mentions, among others, that almost all the English translations "offer a literal translation" and thus do not provide a "coherent, fluent account of things Quranic" (p. xi). It also contains some notes, a bibliography, and an extensive helpful Index. He emphatically points out that the present work is neither the literal meaning nor an English translation of the Quran, and in his own words:

> The present work is not, strictly speaking, an English translation of the Quran. It attempts to present in simple, fluent English the paraphrase of the meaning and message of the Quran....[T]his is a modest attempt at presenting the meaning and message of the Quran in clear, easy to understand language, supplemented with brief explanatory notes especially for those [who are] new to the Quran and Islam (pp. xi-xii)

There are both serious as well as minor differences between Kidiwai's work and (among others) Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The Holy Quran* (1977) and Abdul Majid Daryabadi's *The Glorious Quran* (2001) - two famous and most widely read English translations of the Quran. For example, 4:34 ("men are the protectors and maintainers of women"; "and (at last) beat them (lightly)") is translated by Kidwai same as that of Ali. Similarly, 2:275 ("those who devour usury") is translated same by all of them. While as, in translating 3:159, they show minor variation: "Consult them in collective affairs" (Kidwai); "and consult them in the affair" (Ali); "and take counsel with them in the affair" (Daryabadi). Likewise, with regard to 24:31 ("lower their gaze and guard their private parts"), they show difference(s): Kidwai's and Daryabadi's translation is same, while as Ali writes "modesty" instead of "private parts." There are many other such examples of minor and major changes/ variations in the translation as well as of similarity between these translations.

Moreover, Kidwai translates *Rabb* as Lord (1:2); *Rūh* as spirit (70: 4) and in 78: 38 spirit (the angel Gabriel); *Nūr* as light (24: 35-6): *Taqwa* as the Fear of God (59: 18-19). Kidwai occasionally adds parenthesis - to make clear the meaning of some terms and phrases: e.g., "So repent to your Creator and kill yourselves (the wrongdoers among you)" (2:54);

"Do they (these Hypocrites)" not know even this much" (2: 77); "(The guided ones are) in houses (mosques) which God has allowed to be raised for mentioning His name" (24: 36).

In sum, keeping in view the other features of the work as well, especially the brief explanatory notes, Bibliography, and the extensive subject Index, it may be said that Kidwai's book clearly validates and rationalizes its title as well as justifies his claim that it is not an English translation, but is the "paraphrase of the meaning and message of the Quran" presented in simple and fluent English, that is easy to understand by both natives and non-natives. It, indeed, stands apart from other English translations of the Quran, produced in the last many decades of last century and in 21st century as well.

All in all, Kidwai's *What is in the Quran? Message of the Quran in Simple English* is unique in many ways and would be fully helpful for enthusiastic scholars and readers of the Quran and particularly for new comers to Islam.

Publication details of the first edition:

2013. New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, xii+ 415 pp., Rs. 995. ISBN 978-813-09236-3-5 (hbk).

II

By Masoodul Hasan

A prolific and knowledgeable reviewer of the English translations of the Quran, Abdur Raheem Kidwai has risen to scholarly eminence from an early romance with English Literary Orientalism on to sound Islamic lore, inspired, no doubt, by his familial tradition of Quranic scholarship. Alongside his literary pursuits and

publications he has contributed regularly to Islamic journals, and has recently published four notable works: *Bibliography of the English Translations of Quran 1647-2002 (2008), 365 Sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) (2007), Essential Teachings of the Quran (2010), and Translating the Untranslatable - A Critical Guide to 60 English Translations of Quran (2011)*. His latest work under review offers a fluently readable English version of the Quran with a deliberate "reader friendly" approach. In the preface he emphatically clarifies that [this version] is not, strictly speaking, an English translation of the Quran," and further adds that it presents "in simple, fluent English the paraphrase of the meaning and message of the Quran" (p. xi). In the present context of the growing self-consciousness among the Muslims the rising inflow of the West-based new-Muslims, and the upsurge of Islamophobia, the present work promises to enlarge the reach of the about it, and assuage, however fractionally or remotely, the hate-Islam pristine message of the Ouran, correct some grave misperceptions hysteria and its deleterious repercussions.

The twentieth century registered a spurt in the Oriental and Islamic studies that encouraged the vogue of English translations of the Quran. Muslim scholars also undertook English translations directly from the Arabic, or re-translations from some subsidiary languages for the first time in the century. However, invariably, both the types of translations tended to be semantic in focus, characterized by archaic expressions and unfamiliar syntactic patterns in a bid to attain maximal equivalence with the original Arabic text. The last three decades of the century, however, also marked the emergence of translations in the current English idiom, exemplified in the works of M. Akbar (1976), Ahmad Ali (1984), T.B. Irving (1985) and C. Turner (1997). Kidwai's is the latest example of the trend, though he does not engage directly with the Arabic original, and seems to bank largely on his preferred versions of Yusuf Ali, Mawdudi, Daryabadi, Mohsin Khan and Hilali. With over thirty-five years of experience of teaching English language and literature at different levels in India and UK he is a trustworthy master of simple, idiomatic, communicative English. His

vocabulary is simpler, expression more forthright, syntax freer of convolutions, and the resultant discourse more fluent than of the other above - mentioned versions. Elaborate comparisons may be tedious and beyond the scope of a brief review, but a couple of brief, random examples may suffice to illustrate the point.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali translates the Quranic verse XXXVIII:87 thus: "This is no less than a message to (all) the world." In Abdullah Yusuf Ali's revised Saudi version it reads as follows: "This is no less than a Reminder to (all) the worlds." Mohsin Khan and Hilali render it in these words: "It (this Quran) is only a Reminder for all the *'Alamin* (mankind and jinn.)" In Ahmad Ali's version the corresponding verse runs thus: "This is only a warning for mankind." Kidwai puts it in these words: "This Ouran is the Message for all the people world over." While Yusuf Ali's syntax may sound rather outlandish to the modern reader, Mohsin Khan and Hilali retain the Arabic word *'Alamin.,* that is likely to puzzle the readers unfamiliar with the Arabic term. Similarly, the words 'Reminder' and 'Warning' are rather restrictive in scope and subsume punitive shades. But the word 'Message' chosen by Kidwai is more comprehensive in sense, and more in accord with modern sensibility.

Three verses (the Quran, LXXXI:25-27) read in Yusuf Ali's translation as under: "Nor is it the word of an evil spirit accursed./ Then whither go ye? /Verily, this is no less than a Message to (all) the worlds." Mohsin Khan and Hilai translate the verses thus: "And it (the Quran) is not the word of the outcast (*Shaitan*). /Then where are you going? /Verily, this (Quran) is no less than a Reminder to (all) the *Alamin* (mankind and jinn)." Ahmad Ali renders them as follows: "This is not the utterance of an accursed devil, /So whither do you stray? /This is a reminder to all the worlds." Kidwai's version is briefer, simpler and freer of quaint phrases than the other aforementioned versions. It reads as follows: "The Quran is not the word of Satan on whom there is a curse./ Where then are you going?/ This Quran is advice for all the people (of all times)."

Kidwai is an unstubborn purist in his orientation, very chary of unorthodox interpretive inputs in the Quranic exegesis (*tafsir bi al-ra'i*), and yet he is usually, pragmatically alive to contemporary credal perplexities and civilizational paradoxes. His own reference to his work as "reader friendly" is apt and significant. God affirms that the Quran is made easy of apprehensibility (the Quran, XLIV:58; LIV:17, 22, 32 and 40), but translators' obsessive concern for semantic and syntactic equivalences with the original has unusually led to the constriction of the easy apprehensibility of its message. Kidwai sagaciously steers clear of the philological eddies, and sails home comfortably, faithfully adhering to the basic informativity and intentionality of the Quran. His footnotes are minimal and selective, relevant to the text and modern times. Human rights, gender justice, peace and the menace of belligerence of complex shades and shapes are the crying concerns of mankind today. In brief cogent footnotes Kidwai signals the basic Quranic stances on these issues. For example, the footnote on the Quran, V:32 firmly states: "The verse clearly states how strongly Islam denounces violence and any unjust killing. There is no place in Islam for terrorism and mindless bloodshed" (p. 62). In another footnote (on the Quran, XXXIII:35) he comments: "This underscores the note of gender parity and equality in Islam" (p. 248). Yet another footnote (on the Quran XL:40) attests: "Another Quranic verse reflective of total gender parity and equality in Islam, as both the sinners and the pious, be they the men or women, are promised punishment and reward respectively" (p. 281). Likewise, the importance of good neighbourly relations axis of civilized polity, is aptly stressed in a footnote (on the Quran, IV:36) in these words: "The Quran is so particular about maintaining and strengthening cordial relations that it asks Muslims to treat well even those whom they meet by chance as, for example, a co-passenger in a journey" (p. 47). Occasionally, for the readers' convenience some major injunctions/prohibitions are listed together in a single footnote, for example, on the Quran, VI:119 (p. 78). Some technical terms are also explained at appropriate places, and the modern geographical locations of some ancient Quranic

sites are also identified in a number of footnotes for an easier understanding of the text and the context.

The compiler's sensibility of the leading modern civilizational issues is fairly reflected in the Index (pp. 397-415) as well. Themes of tolerance, rights, peace, extravagance (read consumerism), hoarding, etc, slurred over in most other translations of the Quran are distinctly indexed here. References to women's status, rights, dignity, roles, etc. are elaborately indexed under separate categories. Though primarily targeted at Western new Muslims, the book promises to be equally beneficial and educative to the born/ indigenous Muslims too, as comparable, lucid, faithful and "reader friendly" presentation of the composite Quranic message in regional languages is generally hard to come by. Even curious outsiders interested in easy, direct acquaintance with the Quranic contents will find the book matching their quest squarely.

III

By Abdur Rasheed Siddiqui

Abdur Raheem Kidwai is Professor of English and Director of the UGC Academic Staff College, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India. He is also the Visiting Fellow at the School of English, University of Leicester, UK. He has a special interest in the English translations of the Quran. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, commissioned him to write this substantial work on the subject: *The Bibliography of the English translations of the Quran: 1649 - 2002 - A Critical Study* (Madina, King Fahd Quran Printing Complex, 2007). Moreover, his other significant work on the subject *Translating the Untranslatable: A Critical Guide to 60 English Translations of the Quran.* (New Delhi, Sarup Publishers, 2011), offers analytical reviews on all the complete English translations. His other works on Islam and the Quran are: *Essential Teachings of the Quran and 365 Sayings of Prophet Muhammad* (published by Kube, Leicester, UK and Jaico, Mumbai) and *Daily Wisdom* (A series of three books presenting selections from the Quran, Hadith and prayers, published by Kube, Leicester, UK).

His reviews on the books on Islam, especially the Quran have appeared in such reputed journals as *The Muslim World Book Review*, Leicester, UK; *Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies*, UK; *Islamic Studies,* Islamabad, Pakistan, *The Journal of Quranic Studies* Madina, Saudi Arabia, *Insights*, Islamabad, Pakistan etc. He has also delivered lectures on the English translations of the Quran at the Universities of Oxford, Brimingham, UK and Mauritius.

The Quran is a precious gift and bounty which the Most Compassionate One has bestowed on mankind. It is His Mercy and Benevolence that He created man, taught him speech and provided him with a Book of Guidance. His messengers and prophets came in succession since the creation of the very first human being, the Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) and his wife, bringing God's guidance. The Scriptures sent before the Quran were aimed at particular nations and for a specific period. When humanity reached maturity and inhabited the entire earth there was a need of a complete code of life containing such guidance which remains valid for all times and nations. Thus the ultimate Book of guidance, the Quran, was revealed. For the final revelation, God chose the Arabic language to convey the message clearly and precisely. It is the miracle of the Quran that the Arabic language even after fifteen centuries remains unchanged and accessible to all those who speak Arabic.

The Muslim *Ummah* was charged with the responsibility of conveying God's message to the rest of mankind as no more prophets will be sent to convey the guidance. The Quran repeatedly reminds the *Ummah* to convey the message by being a witness unto mankind as the Messenger had been a witness unto them (Al-Baqarah 2: 143 and al-Hajj 22: 78). Thus over the centuries the Quran has been translated in most languages of the world. The first English translation of the Quran was published in 1649 by Alexander Ross and until the 1920s most translations were done by Orientalists who had their own personal biases. So far there are around seventy translations of the Quran in the English language.

Many are dated and in need of revision. There is therefore always a scope for new up-to-date translations to meet the needs of new generations. Usually the translations so far published are academic in nature that use a difficult and unfamiliar vocabulary which modern readers find difficult to understand. To meet this need Kidwai who is Professor of English at the Aligarh Muslim University, India has attempted to translate the Quran in simple English.

In this translation, Kidwai has attempted "to present in simple, fluent English the paraphrase of the meaning and message of the Quran." (p. xi) Hence he has tried to make it user-friendly and made some variations in selecting the pronouns which were appropriate with the context. He has also added explanatory words within brackets to make the meaning clearer. Above all, his footnotes provide very important and useful background information about the persons, nations, places and events mentioned in the text. They also provide useful explanations of Islamic *ibadat* and concepts like jihad and *shura*. These are particularly valuable to those who are new to the Quran or Islam. The translation is very simple, yet it tries to capture the beauty of the Quran.

It is commendable that Kidwai has not translated the titles of the *surahs*, as they are proper names of the *surahs*. He has rightly pointed out that "the titles of 114 Quranic *Surahs* are not to be taken as the subject/theme/topic heading. These titles served, at best, only as convenient labels or tags for easy, ready reference and identification." (p. x). On the whole, the transliteration of the surah titles are good. Only a couple of titles do not look right. To designate *Surah Al Imran as Ali Imran and Surah al-Duha as al-Zuha* need re-consideration.

At times the translation becomes too literal and not quite idiomatic. For example: "They want to put out the light of God with their mouths."(9: 32) In another place the same verse is translated more appropriately as: "They (the unbelievers) want to put off God's light by blowing off with their mouths." (61: 8).

Perhaps an explanatory note about the eight categories of the people entitled to benefit from the *zakat* fund should be included at 9: 60. A note about the historical incident of the initial defeat of the Byzantians and the Quranic prediction of their ultimate victory in a few years time would be appropriate in *Surah al-Rum*. A similar note about the Battle of Ditches in *Surah al-Ahzab* would be useful for the readers.

Kidwai has followed the usual practice of other translators in giving verse by verse translation so that the reader can compare it with the original. However, as this translation is meant for those who just want to understand the message of the Quran, it would have been better if the translation was presented in paragraphs format to keep the continuity of the narration and create a proper impact which cannot be achieved by segregated sentences. This can be observed by reading the verses of *Surah Ta Ha* (20) verses 25-36 and verses 41-45 which record a dialogue between God and the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) or the qualities of the believers mentioned in verses 1-11 of *Surah al-Mu'minun* (23). There are many other passages where this is felt acutely. This is the reason why Mawlana Mawdudi, in his *Tafhim al-Quran*, departed from the normal practice and gave the translation in the form of paragraphs. However, this practice was not followed in the English translation.

On the whole, the present translation is accurate but I noticed that in the translation of the verse 105 of *Surah al-Anbiya'* (21) the insertion of "and in the heavenly tablet," which is wrong. It should have been "after the reminder or exhortation" to convey the right meaning. Again it does not look quite accurate that word *taqwa* in the verse 37 of *Surah al-Hajj* is translated as "good intention." There is a slight mistake in the placing of Note 169; it should have been at the end of verse 18 of *Surah Fatir* (35).

This translation in simple English presenting the meaning and message of the Quran is a very commendable effort. It will be very useful for those who just want to understand the Quranic teachings concisely without elaborate commentaries. In this respect, the inclusion of a detailed Index is most valuable.

57
Omeri, Abdul Salam
Easy Commentary of the Quran
(2014)

Omeri's brief Foreword (pp. iii-v) says nothing about the genesis of this work, its hallmarks, its objectives, its methodology and its sources. There is no note from its translator, Sheikh Abdul Jaleel either. Presumably it is the English version of original in Urdu.

Prefaced to each Surah is an account of its title, period of revelation, historical background and main themes. In place of annotations explicating things Quranic, Omeri offers explanatory translation of Quranic verses, supplemented with additional material within parentheses, and a commentary. The latter consists, in the main, of a paraphrase of chunks of verses, interspersed with *tafsir* Ahadith. The inclusion of the latter has lent credibility to his exposition.

Omeri's translation is markedly explanatory. Instead of translating Quranic concepts and terms, he has retained these in original, followed by their elucidation in parentheses. This is evident from the following examples:

i. And do not marry Al-Mushrikat (idolatresses)… and give not (your daughters) in marriage to Al-Mushrikun (idolaters)… Allah makes His Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations etc) clear to mankind that they may remember. (Al-Baqarah 2:221, p.75).

ii. And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, such are the Kafirun (i.e. disbelievers)

    And whosoever does not judge by that which Allah has revealed, such are the Zalimun (polytheists and wrong-doers) And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed (then) such (people) are the Fasiqun (the rebellious i.e. disobedient) (Al-Maidah 5.44, 45 and 47 pp.257 and 258)

iii. Or have they taken (for worship) aliha (gods) from the earth who raise the dead? (Al-Anbiyya 21:21,p.730)

iv. … perform As-Salat (Iqamat as-Salat) Verily Al-Salat (the prayer) prevents from Al-Fahasha (i.e. great sins of every kind) and Al-Munkarat (i.e. disbelief, polytheism and every kind of evil). (Al-Ankabut 29:45, p.926)

v. And O you Al-Mujrimun (criminals, polytheists, sinners, disbelievers in the Islamic monotheism, wicked evil ones etc.) (Ya Sin 36:59, p.1026)

The retaining of the original Quranic expressions in the text of the translation and their loose, sweeping definitions are likely to put off readers. In their English translation Abdalhaqq Bewley and Aisha Bewley (1999) too, have kept the original Quranic terms and concepts intact, without offering even their English equivalents. Omeri has, at least, provided their English version. He should have better placed these in a glossary. For Arabic words appearing recurrently in the English text interrupt the flow of reading.

Omeri's work notwithstanding his explanatory parenthetical additions, is based in the main on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's earlier English rendering of Quran in 1934-1937. It is a pity that he has not acknowledged in his Foreword the enormous debt which he owes to Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

Omeri's commentary, encompassing almost every Quranic verse, does not have any remarkable feature to recommend itself. It mostly revolves around *tafsir* Ahadith which basically provide some clues about *asbab al-nuzul* (circumstantial setting of the Quranic verse/s). Although this approach is helpful in grasping the import of the Quran, it has its own serious limitations. For, such focus on the immediate cause or background leaves this odd impression as if the Quran is a dated work occasioned by the early 7th century events and is addressed only to the people of the day. A commentary on the Quran should bring home the eternal life giving message of the Quran valid for all time and place so that reader may readily relate themselves to it.

Omeri’s work does not mark a substantial addition to Quranic scholarship. Nor does it advance much one’s understanding of the Quran.

Publication details of the first edition:

Quran Publication Centre, Hyderabad, India. Pp.1465

58
Elias, Mufti Afzal Hoosen
Quran Made Easy
(2015)

Born in South Africa, Mufti Elias obtained his Fazil, Alim and Mufti certificates from the prestigious Islamic seminary, Darul Ulum, Deoband, India in early 1980s. In addition to this English translation of the Quran under review, he has edited also Mufti Ashiq Ilahi's *Tafsir Anwar Al-Bayan*. He lectures regularly on Islam as part of *dawah* mission in Africa and caters to the needs of the local Muslim community (www. Alislam.co.za).

Essentially this work is the English version of Mahmudul Hasan's and Shabbir Ahmad Usmani's *Tafsir-i Usmani* in Urdu, and hence a representative Deobandi interpretation of the Quran. It is worth adding that the *Tafsir-i Usmani* itself is actually an updated and expanded version of Shah Abdul Qadir's *Mudih Al Quran* (see my review on its English version *The Noble Quran*, Lahore, Pakistan, Aalameen Publications, 1994 in the *Muslim World Book Review*, Leicester, UK, 18:3 (Spring 1998), 12-15). Shah Abdul Qadir was an illustrious son of the renowned Islamic revivalist, Shah Waliullah, thus the pedigree of this work is impeccably sound, rooted deep into the mainstream Quranic scholarship of the Indian subcontinent. This work has been rendered into English by Ismail Ebrahim and Mufti Elias, the two traditional scholars based in South Africa, and is published from Pakistan, underscoring as it does the depth and the geographical spread of the Deobandi school.

More importantly, this work is characterised by several reader friendly features which facilitate an easy access to the meaning and message of the Quran to even those readers who possess no or little background knowledge of the Quran. The translator's insertion of helpful authentic material within parentheses has made the study of the Quran easy. In doing so, he has shed sufficient light on the circumstantial setting and contextual information which resolve the

occasional ambiguity arising out of pronominal shifts and ellipsis, and explained most of the Quranic allusions, metaphors, parables and other figurative expressions. Take the ambivalent Verse 17 of Al-Baqarah as illustrative. As compared to Abdullah Yusuf Ali's rendering, his version is much more readily comprehensible, owing to the supply of additional material within parentheses:

> Their similitude is that of a man who kindled a fire; when it lighted all around him, God took away their light and left them in utter darkness. So they could not see.
>
> (Al Baqarah, 2:17, Abdullah Yusuf Ali)

> Their likeness (the comparison of the hypocrites) is like that of a people who lit a fire. When the surroundings lit up (and they enjoyed the light, heat, and security of the fire), Allah took away their light and left them in the darkness, unable to see (they cannot find their own way and are scared.)
>
> (Mufti Afzal Hoosen Elias)

Another instance in point is the explanatory translation of the opening verses of Surah Al-Balad which are hardly intelligible in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's literal translation:

> I do call to witness this city; and thou art a free man of this city; and (the mystic ties of) parent and child; verily, We have created man into toil and struggle.
>
> (Al Balad, 90:1-4, Abdullah Yusuf Ali)

Contrast this with the Mufti's fluent version:

> I swear by this city (of Makkah), and you (O Rasulullah) shall be free (of restrictions) in this city (when you conquer it). (This verse foretold the conquest of Makkah which occurred in the 8th year after Hijra.) (I swear) by the father (Adam) and the offspring (mankind). We have certainly created man in toil. (Together with working hard to see his own needs and those of his family, man also faces many difficulties and calamities during his life. While engaged in this, he has to ensure that he is [sic] always follows the injunctions of the Shariah and obeys the laws of his land. The list is endless.)
>
> (Mufti Afzal Hoosen Elias)

The additional information in the above is indeed helpful, though it tends to be somewhat verbose towards the end.

Prefaced to each Surah is helpful information about its title, its link with the previous Surah, and its subject matter and themes. This summary of its circumstantial setting and contents prepares readers better to grasp its meaning and message. Other reader friendly features of the work are extensive Glossary and Index. The former stands out for its brief, authentic description of things Quranic. The entry on Ansar (p 43) is, however, marred by this omission that no reference is made to *Ansar Allah*, the Quranic appellation used of Prophet Jesus's disciples in Verse 14 of Surah Al-Saff. As to Index, notwithstanding its exhaustiveness, it betrays the Mufti's mental reservations on certain issues. For example, all the 35 entries about Jews (p. 1265) project Jews in a very dark light, referring as these do to only their misdeeds. In Verses 40, 47, and 122 of Al Baqarah, the Quran speaks of Allah's favours to the Jews and of having preferred them to others, which has gone unreported. Likewise, the entry on women lacks balance, with its emphasis on their "gross moral depravity, ill will, and punishment" (p 1278). The Quran speaks highly of Maryam, Pharaoh's wife, and the Believing women in general. This again has gone unnoticed, rendering his description lopsided.

The Mufti has drawn upon a few Ahadith in elucidating the message of the Quran. It is a pity that these have not been properly cited. In his attempt to stay close to the Quranic text, the Mufti has retained scores of Quranic/Arabic terms and concepts without translating or defining these. This runs counter to the basic norm of translation. If readers are grounded well in Arabic, they do not need a translation. Unfamiliar with these so many Arabic expressions, poor readers are left groping in the dark about the tenor of these words which constitute the basic, salient vocabulary of the Quran: *rab, nabi, ayat, rasul, kafirun, ruhul quds, iman, kufr, shayatin, salah, zakah, muminun, taqwa, akhirah, haq, mushrikin, ahl al-kitab, Janmah, qayamah, masjid, tawaf, maqam-i Ibrahim, din, ilah, qibla, masjid al-haram, sabr, anbiya, qisas, itikaf, haj, dhikr,*

masharul haram, jahannum, bani Israil, al-Rahman, and aaliha. (passim)

The Mufti has been nonetheless largely successful in deciphering most of the Quranic allusions in his explanatory translation. However, his literal rendering of *Ashab al-Ukhdud* as "The people of the trenches" (verse 4 of Surah al Buruj) is too vague and generalised. Readers should have been briefly told about this Quranic allusion to the 6th century Christians of Najran who were persecuted by the Jewish Himyarite king of Yemen, Dhu Nuwas.

The level of both transliteration and translation is regrettably not up to the mark, as is the case with most of the books on Islam published from the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Some examples of his unidiomatic usage are: i) "He has a close position to Us" (p. 840) ii) "They shall be entered into the Fire" (p. 842) iii) "Until the Day of the appointed time" (p. 845) iv) "Why are bangles of gold not thrown to him?" (p. 909) v) "Allah will destroy the actions" (p. 940) and vi) "Allah did not tire from creating them" (p. 938).

On the whole, this translation, abounding in valuable authentic material which is needed for understanding the Quran, represents an earnest, laudable attempt in the cause of promoting a better understanding of the Quran. This work, however, stands in need of some improvement in execution, especially presentation.

Publication details of the first edition:

Karachi, Pakistan, Zam Zam Publications, 2015. pp. 1278. ISBN: 978-9695831366.

Elias, Mufti, A.H.
The Noble Quran
(2024)

Though the work under review is projected as the English translation of the Indian Tablīghī Jamāʿat activist, Muḥammad Yūnus Palānpūrī's Urdu translation of the Qur'ān, Riyāḍ al-Qur'ān (2018), it is a hybrid work, marked by many additions and omissions. First a word about the omissions. The original work carries an extensive introduction touching upon the excellence of learning and teaching the Qur'ān; the merits of the Qur'ānic sūrahs and Qur'ānic supplications and details about the chronology of the sūrah. All this material does not appear in the English translation under review. Instead, it contains scores of explanatory notes on several Qur'ānic events, terms and personalities. Presumably these have been inserted by the English translator, Mufti Afzal Hoosen Elias (1955-2018), a South Africa based Islamic scholar who has authored several books on Islam, including his own English translation of the Qur'ān, Quran Made Easy (Karachi, Zam Zam Publications, 2015). His and the translation under review are representative of the tafsīr bi'lma'thūr and both have a strong affiliation with the Deoband/Tablīghī Jamāʿat. Little wonder then that the main thrust of the notes is on commonplaces, mostly about the Prophet's battles, and restricting the meaning of the Qur'ānic verses to their immediate circumstantial setting (asbāb al-nuzūl), which regrettably tends to present the Qur'ān as a somewhat dated work, hedged in by the time and place of its revelation. The author makes no attempt to relate the meaning and message of the Qur'ān to our times. An exposition of the Qur'ān intended for today's English-speaking readers should spell out the eternal Qur'ānic guidance regarding the following challenging questions: terrorism, peaceful coexistence, gender parity, Islamophobia, Muslims as minorities, maintaining Muslim identity in the face of the global ascendancy of right-wing ideologies, and the current atheistic and

godless way of life steeped in crass materialism. Needless to add, the basic objective of tafsīr has all along been to expound the Qur'ānic message with an eye on the burning issues of the day. Tafsīr should and does show a way out in the light of the timeless guidance of the Qur'ān.

The author displays an adequate knowledge of the Bible, as is evident from over a dozen references to the Bible (pp. 3, 256, 325, 449, 457, 530, 579, 603, 693, 695, 705, 707, 742, 877, 939 and 983). In most of these instances, biblical passages, retaining remnants of the divine revelation, have been cited in order to supplement and complement the Qur'ānic account. More valuable, however, are a few exegetical notes which refute some fallacious notions which have crept into the Bible, as for example, (i) Prophet Ishmael, not Prophet Isaac (peace be upon them), as the son whom Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) intended to sacrifice (p. 693); (ii) exonerating Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) from the atrocious biblical charge of idolatry (p. 705); (iii) repudiating the outrageous claim that God rested on the seventh day of creation (p. 742); (iv) the omission of the doctrine of the resurrection from the Old Testament (p. 939).

The English rendering of the original Urdu is faithful and the translator deserves credit for this. However, his grounding in chaste academic English idiom usage and presentation skills is not up to the mark. At times, his too literal rendering is not likely to go well with English speaking readers (2: 130, p. 30). An outlandish feature of his rendering is the insertion of synonyms in parenthesis for even ordinary, easy to understand words. Take the following only four pages as illustrative: "destruction (ruin), belie (deny), resurrected (brought back to life), reality (truth), exchange (swap), burden (load), ignorant (unaware), astray (amiss), ascribed (made), afflicted (hurt), adversity (hardship), despair (misery)" (pp. 190-193). It betrays the translator's lack of confidence to choose an apt expression. Moreover, this hinders the flow of reading. An English translator of such a majestic work as the Qur'ān should have a clear understanding of the nuances of the target language. Too much

capitalization in the text is yet another irksome aspect of this rendering. Prima facie, there is no justification for capitalizing such neutral words as "Presence, Return and Evil" (p. 605) and "Confederacy and Siege" (p. 640). The translator has an annoying predilection for branding occasionally Qur'ānic verses as "mystic" (pp. 922, 981 and 982). Worse, he does not elucidate their meaning, which can only confound readers. His unfamiliarity with English idiom could prove as another obstacle for readers (pp. 31, 274, 401, 404, 424, 507, 600, 621, 627 and 659). Faulty transliteration abounds in the work. Some instances in point are "Ridhwaan" (p. 799); "Banu Nadeer" (p. 865); "Aali Imraan," "Al-Anfaal," "Yaa Seen," "Al-Fat-h," and "Al-Kaafiroon" etc., (pp. i-iv).

There are some redeeming features in this work. Its thematic index is 90 pages long (pp. 1001-1091), affording readers with an opportunity to glean the Qur'ānic stance on a very broad range of issues and topics. However, it is a great pity that this massive, valuable information has not been arranged alphabetically or in any plausible order. It opens abruptly with" Morals" and digresses on to "the Quran," "Prior Nations," "Criminal Law and so on, to conclude with "History." One is left clueless about how to navigate this otherwise useful material. The author appears at his sharpest in explicating the meaning of certain verses such as al-Mu'minūn, 23:1 (p. 516), al-Furqān 25: 68 (p. 553) and al-Ikhlāṣ 112: 1-4 (pp. 997-998). Equally cogent is his elucidation of al-Mudaththir 74: 30 (p. 924). Such enlightening and reader-friendly notes are, however, few and far in between. So this work cannot be rated highly as a substantial addition to the spate of English translations of the Qur'ān by Muslims.

Details of this edition:

New Delhi: Islamic Book Services, 2024, pp. 1092m ISBN: 9351691667.

59
Muhammad, A. L. Bilal
Islamic Scripture: Translation /Interpretations of the Arabic Quran
(2015)

Notwithstanding its pompous title, this work contains neither Bilal Muhammad's own translation nor any "Interpretations." The work is a pitiable example of a non-academic publishing adventure. For it has no Preface, no Introduction, no Footnote, no Glossary and no Index. Yet it claims to offer "Interpretations" of the Quran.

The only one-liner authorial note in this work of 306 pages runs as follows: "The translations/interpretations in this book are based on *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation, and Commentary* by A. Yusuf Ali and Quran translations by Imam W. Deen Mohammad." (p.4) No publication details of the latter source are provided. Google search points to the existence of only this work, *Quran: Translations* compiled by members of the Imam W. D. Mohammed (2012). As it is, it is not on record that Imam W. Deen Mohammed ever produced any Quran translation. Such a vague and misleading reference is unacceptable in the academic world.

As to the quantum of Bilal Mohammed's reliance on his other source, Abdullah Yusuf Ali's work, the following examples serve as an instance in point:

(1) Gardens of Eternity, whose doors will (ever) be open to them. Therein they will recline (at ease). Therein can they call (at pleasure) for fruit in abundance, and (delicious) drink. And beside them will be chaste women restraining their glances, (companions) of equal age. Such is the Promise made to you for the Day of the Account! Truly such will be Our Bounty (to you); it will never fail.

(Sad 38:50-54, Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation).

Gardens of eternity, whose doors will be open to them. They will recline therein. Therein they can call for fruit in abundance and drink. And beside them will be chaste women restraining their glances, Companions of equal age. Such is the promise made to you for the Day of Account. Truly such will be Our bounty and it will never fail.

(Bilal Mohammed's rendering, p. 198)

(2) See you how your Lord dealt with the Companions of the Elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them Flights of Birds, striking them with stones of baked clay. Then did He make them like an empty field of stalks and straw, (of which the corn) has been eaten up.

(Al-Fil 105: 1-5, Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation)

Do you not see how your Lord dealt with the Companions of the elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them flocks of birds, striking them with stones of baked clay. Then He made them like an empty field of stalks and straw which has been eaten.

(Bilal Mohammed's rendering, p. 297)

(3) To you have We granted the Fount (of Abundance). Therefore to your Lord turn in prayer and sacrifice. For he who hates you, he will be cut off (form Future Hope).

(Al-Kawthar 108: 1-3, Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation)

To you, We have granted the fountain of abundance. Therefore turn in prayer and sacrifice to your Lord. For he who hates you, he will be cut off.

(Bilal Mohammed's rendering, p. 300)

Needless to add, at the above and numerous other places the work under review is no more than ad verbatim replica of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's version. However, in some instances Bilal Mohammed does depart from his main source. Take the following as illustrative: He translates bismillah thus: "With God's Name, the

Merciful Benefactor, the Merciful Redeemer" (p. 10). *Rabb al-Alamin* (Al-Fatihah 1:2) is likewise rendered differently: "the Guardian Evolver of all the systems of knowledge." (p. 9); *ashharu malumat* (Al-Baqarah 2:197) as "the Hajj months are knowledge based" (p. 19), rather than as "the well known Hajj months."

While his taking some liberty in translating certain Quranic expression may be condoned, his omission of any explanatory note is unpardonable. As already stated, it presents only a bare translation, without any background or supplementary information about the Quranic places, persons and things. How can those new to the Quran decipher the Quranic miracles, allusions, parables and ellipsis? Nor does the author ever relate the message of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad's *Sira*. Since this work is bereft of elucidation, no *Hadith* is cited either. It is hard to envisage how this work will advance, in any degree, readers' understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran. Had this, at least, introduced to readers Imam W. Deen Mohammed's interpretations of things Quranic, it would have ranked as a contribution to Quranic studies. Let us hope some of these gaps will be filled in the next edition of the work.

Publication details of the first edition:

Muhammad & Co. 2015. pp. 306. ISBN:1506143490

60
Read Foundation
The Noble Quran: Translation of the Meaning in English Language
(2015)

This book is a queer example of unauthorized, surreptitious publication of someone else's work in toto. The present translation is actually an ad verbatim copy of MAS Abdel Haleem's *The Quran: A New Translation* (Oxford, Oxford Oxford University Press, 2004), with only the following minor differences:

(1) The title is a changed one.

(2) Abdel Haleem's introduction, very brief notes prefacing each Surah and Index have been dropped for reasons best known to the publisher. Their omission has been a serious loss to readers. For these provided useful background information for a better appreciation of the meaning and message of the Quran.

(3) The English translation of only three Surah titles has been altered: a) Surah Al-Furqan: from Abdel Haleem's "The [Scripture that] Shows the Difference" to "The Differentiator," b) Surah Al-Hujurat: from "The Private Quarters" to "The Private Rooms," and c) Surah Al-Buruj: from "The Constellations" to "The Towering Constellations."

Other than this nominal and innocuous tinkering, the work under review is exactly the same as Abdel Haleem's earlier work. The entire English translation of the Quranic text and all the 741 brief explanatory notes have been lifted from Abdel Haleem's.

The translation thus carries all the strengths and weaknesses of Abdel Haleem's work. In my Review on Abdel Haleem's translation (*Muslim World Book Review*, 25:1, Autumn 2004, Pp. 21-23) I had pointed out some of its glaring flaws, besides praising its valuable features, in the hope that these will be remedied in the

next edition. Alas, there is no such revision in the present edition. The Quranic text is missing as in the original. Explanatory notes do not tackle any of the burning issues of the day. Erudite discussions on the niceties of the Arabic language and grammar in this work which is addressed to the English speaking readership appear odd and out of place. Take his elucidation of Surah Al-Fatiha as illustrative. There is hardly any exposition of its life-giving and spiritually invigorating message. Instead, all the 7 explanatory notes on the Surah talk about "the intensive form, the Arabic root and attribution of the verb" etc. As already stated, the present edition retains all of Abdel Haleem's explanatory notes, including such unhelpful and too cryptic ones that *Zakah* is some "tax on Muslims" (p. 141) or that *dhikr* is "renown or reminder" (p. 362). Again, as in the original, in the notes in the present work, certain linguistic points are elucidated on the authority of Razi and Baydawi, without any attempt to address the concerns and mindset of the present day English readership.

It is hard to think of a plausible reason for this reprint of Abdel Haleem's work clandestinely, without giving him credit.

Publication details of the first edition:

Germany, Read Foundation, 2015. pp. 484.

61
El-Hady, Loay Mohammad
The Quran: A Rhyming, Contextual English Rendition
(2016)

In its presentation this venture by a British new Muslim is markedly different from other translations of the Quran in English. First, El Hady's is an attempt at producing a rhymed version, though he has not been consistent and successful in it. For rhyming entails, at times, the compulsive choice of such words which do not faithfully reflect the meaning of the original. His contriving sometimes amounts to overstretching the point. Apart from rhyming, El Hady has brought out a multi-coloured translation, with this colour coding: in black the rhymed rendering of the Quranic text; in blue the explication of the text with reference to Hadith or a classical *tafsir* and in red the other Quranic verse(s) of an identical import. While both the explanation and cross references to similar Quranic verses help readers fathom better the message, the heaping of all this material in the body of the translated text is something too clumsy, nay weird. This useful information should have been neatly placed in footnotes. Regrettably, footnotes have been used only for citing bibliographical reference to sources.

As a result of this poor selection of the format, his version appears as hotch-potch. For example, the opening words of Surah Al-Baqarah, *alif lam mim* are followed by a long passage in blue, which seeks to shed light on these abbreviated letters. Likewise, Verse 7 of Al-Baqarah states that Allah has set a seal on the hearts, hearing and eyes of disbelievers and that there will be great punishment for them in the Hereafter. In his zeal El Hady has inserted as many as 9 verses of a similar thrust in the text, which could confound readers. These cross reference should have been belter put in a footnote, guiding readers to the further study of the

point under discussion. These multi-coloured additions, pointing to the views of competent *mufassirun* and relevant Quranic verses hamper the flow of reading El Hady's translation. Another passage in Surah Al-Baqarah (Verses 13-16) consists of 10 lines: 6 in blue (*tafsir* reports); 1 in red (an identical Quranic verse and only 3 by way of translating the verses under study. This is nothing short of a maze, which restricts fluent reading.

El-Hady is too fastidious in saying everything on the authority of some *mufassir*, mostly Ibn Abbas's *Tanwir Al-Miqbas, Jalalayn* and Ibn Al-Jawzi's *Zad al-Masir fil Ilm al-Tafsir*. Appended to Surah Al-Baqarah are 336 cross references to these classical works. In all, a whopping number of 4446 citations dot his work. Classical *tafasir* are, no doubt, valuable in their own right and stand out as an epitome of pious scholarship. However, they are, in a sense, dated works. Readers stand in need of Quranic guidance on the issues which confront them today. Ironically enough, the subtitle of El Hady's work claims itself to be "a contextual English rendition." It is far from clear as to which context he has in mind. Verse 4 of Al-Falaq condemns magicians who practice evil. He, however, mistranslates it as "witches," a concept which is alien to Islam.

Prefaced to the work is Sheikh Abu Jafar Al-Hambali which consists of a note on the existing English translations of the Quran. His survey is flawed on many counts. First, he begins with a tendentious Qadyani translation of Muhammad Ali. In so doing, he disregards the earlier translations by Alexander Ross (1649), George Sale (1734), J.M. Rodwell (1861) and E.H. Palmer (1880), and the early Muslim translators namely, Abul Fazl (1911), and Hairat Dhilawi (1916). He ignores also the first Qadyani English translator, Mohammad Abdul Hakeem Khan (1905). Worse, he does not point out the pseudo-rational, apologetic approach of Muhammad Ali and hails his work wrongly as one of the most popular translations. Only 25 editions of Ali have appeared, as compared to 200+ of Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Markaduke Pickthall. While speaking of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's, he,

once again, passes in silence over his garbled version, vitiated with the denial of miracles and *ghayb* (all that which lies beyond the human sense perception). Wrongly he refers to N.J. Dawood, another translator, as an Arab Christian; he was an Iraqi Jew who was hostile to Islam/Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He claims that El Hady's work is addressed to young and new Muslims. There is not a single sentence in this work which caters to the needs of present day Muslims. He is, nonetheless, justified in underscoring El Hady's simple English and non-sectarian approach. His reliance on classical *tafsir* is, however, somewhat disproportionate. The imbalance consists in providing plenty of information about the background and context of Qruanic verses while disregarding altogether their relevance for today's readers.

It is gratifying to note that while El Hady was in his 20s, his self study of the Quran drew him to Islam and since then he has been engaged in mentoring fellow new Muslims, who have been growing in number in the West. Given his background, his reverence for classical Muslim writers is enviable. It is a pity that this work is without glossary, bibliography and index. In view of its unwieldy format, this work is not very rewarding for readers.

Publication details of the first edition:
PDF version, pp.436.

62
Hashemi, Badr
The Quran
(2016)

Badr Hashemi's work represents an ambitious undertaking by a scholar of Pakistani descent, settled in the USA. Included in this voluminous work are the Quranic text, its translation-cum-paraphrase, its transliteration and annotations on Surah Al-Ahqaf onwards. A few Surahs carry endnotes.

Prefaced to each Surah is a comprehensive introduction, presenting and overview of the main themes/topics covered in it. This reader friendly strategy, adopted efficiently by Syed Mawdudi, Ahmad Zaki Hammad and some other Quran scholars goes a long way in mentoring readers. They find themselves in a better position to grasp the Quranic content and context. However, this alone does not suffice for guiding readers. They stand in need of the explanation of various Quranic terms, concepts, events, personalities etc. for making a better sense of the Quranic text. Hashemi appears to have realized the usefulness of annotation at a very late stage. For brief but helpful notes appear in Surah Al-Ahqaf onwards. For example the Quranic allusions to the Hand of Allah, conquest of Khyber, Hudaibiyya treaty, *taqwa*, Allah's help to Believers, *fasiq*, *ikhwah*, and morals and manners in Surahs Al-Fath and Al-Hujurat are cogently explained on the authority of Hadith and classical *mufassirun.*

Hashemi has opted for a detailed paraphrase in his English rendering of the Quranic text. As a result, his is not a translation but an extensive, explanatory version of the Quran. The following example illustrates his approach. Verses 1-2 of Surah Muhammad read thus:

> Allah lets the actions of those go to waste who refuse to believe and stop people from this way. As to those who believed, do

> good and believe in what is sent to Muhammad, which is indeed the truth, Allah will remove their evil actions and improve their condition (Muhammad 47:1-2).

In contrast to this is Hashemi's following long wided rendering, of the same marked by his extra-Quranic additions:

> Those who do not believe in the Unshared Unity and Uniqueness of Allah and obstruct others from pursuing the Path of Allah, He will cause all of their good deeds go waste so they will find no rewards for these in the life after this life: while He will absolve those of their sinful deeds who believe in the Unshared Unity and Uniqueness of Allah, His Message and Messengers, the Resurrection and its correlatives, and fulfill the requisites of faith by deeds of righteousness and believe in what has been revealed onto Prophet Muhammad— the Quran and that it is the Whole and Eternal Truth from their Lord; and He would set aright their heart and improve their spiritual situation so that they never fall in error.
>
> (Muhammad 47:1-2, vol. 2, p.14)

Hashemi has drawn upon Google/Quran Transliteration First English Clear Quran. As is evident from the following examples, it is not a reliable source. He should have better followed the standard transliteration system used by such prestigious publishing houses as Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK or Brill, Leiden, Holland. Presently, in the absence of diacritical marks and proper spacing the following transliterated passages appear jumbled up and almost incomprehensible. Some of the words are grossly wrong and misleading as "th" for "dh," "o" or "oo" for "u," "AAa" for "á" etc:

> *Thalika al-kitabu… Allatheena… biolghaybi… alssalata… waallatheena… onzila… Ola-ika… AAala… AAalyhim… tunthirhum… waAAala samAAhim…AAathabun Aaatheem… wabialyawmi… bimu/mineen… YukhadiAAoona… yashAAuroon… maradur… yakthiboon… Wa-itha… al-ardi… anu/mina… yaAAlamoon… maAAkum… yaAAmahoon… Ishtarawoo alddalaleta… alluathee. Adaat… thahaba… thulumatin, AAumyun… yarjAAoon… thulumatun waraAAdun…*

yajAAloona asabiAAhum… athanihim… alsawaAAiqi hathra… bialkafireen.

(Al-Baqarah 2:1-19)

Readers cannot decipher these words phonetically or lexically. For English speaking readers, transliteration is anyway of little help, for they do not have any grounding in Arabic pronunciation and word forms. Hashemi's failure to use diacritical marks and phonetic symbols have aggravated the problem further.

Another irksome feature of his work is the frequent recourse to the apologetic/liberal Muhammad Asad's unconventional views which are discordant with the stance of *Ahl Al-Sunnah wa Al-Jamhur*. Hashemi prefers the latter but he does not contradict Asad either. This is something disastrous for readers as they are exposed to divergent views on many issues. So far from guiding readers this work confounds them.

Some positive, redeeming features of this work are: Glossary, Thematic Index and Bibliography.

A condensed, well presented version of this work could be more beneficial for readers.

Details of the first edition:

The Holy Quran Research Foundation, Islamabad, Pakistan. 2016. 6 Volumes, www.Facebook.com/Treasures of The Faith of Islam.

63
Khattab, Mustafa
The Clear Quran: A Thematic English Translation of the Message of the Final Revelation
(2016)

Mustafa Khattab's new English translation of the Quran admirably delivers much of what its title promises. It is marked by a number of reader-friendly features and hence this is easy to understand and thus justifies its title. Moreover, it succeeds largely in bringing out the meaning and message of the Quran. In view of these and several other welcome features it may be placed in the enviable category of the very few English translations which may be recommended to readers, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The two other remarkable translations in this category are: i) Ahmad Zaki Hammad's *The Gracious Quran* (2007), and ii) Tarif Khalidi's *The Quran* (2008). Amid more than 90 complete English translations, these three stand out for contextualizing the meaning and message of the Quran for today's readers who mired in the turbulent modernity and Westernization yearn for divine guidance for leading life. Common to all these three translators is their sound Islamic knowledge and their thorough and discerning familiarity with the Western/liberal worldview. This enables them to present before readers the Quranic guidance in a readily comprehensible idiom. Mustafa Khattab's credentials for embarking on this venture are both apt and impeccable: Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the prestigious Islamic seminary, Al-Azhar, Egypt, followed by his years long role and responsibilities as Chaplain at Brock University, and as Fulbright Inter Faith scholar and Imam in Canada. The latter assignments appear to have shaped and sharpened his perception of the mental level, mindset and quandary of his target readership - the Muslims constantly exposed to the

currents and cross-currents of the Godless Western intellectuality. Khattab deserves credit for having carried out, to some degree needs analysis of his readership. For his exposition of things Quranic addresses most of their concerns and his presentation caters to their mental needs to a satisfactory level. Needless to add, he enjoys command over both Arabic, his mother tongue and English, the target language. Many of these features are regrettably conspicuous by their absence in most of the English translations undertaken by a host of well meaning Muslim scholars. It is indeed gratifying to note Khattab overcoming the desiderata of earlier translators. That he is alive to the pitfalls of reckless translation, particularly of the Quran, comes out in his critique on some translations (pp. v, vi and vii). In his list of good translations the inclusion of M.A.S. Abdel Haleem and the omission of Tarif Khalidi, however, strikes as a jarring note. He is off the mark in speaking of Abdul Hakim Khan as the first Muslim translator; he was actually the first Qadyani translator (See Abdur Raheem Kidwai, "Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan's The Holy Quran (1905): The First Muslim or the First Qadyani English Translation? Insights, Islamabad, Pakistan. 2:1 (2009), pp. 57-75). Moreover, M. M. Pickthall (1930) preceded Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934-1937) in producing "one of the most widely circulated English versions of the Quran" (p.vi). Khattab's clarification about using the pronoun, "He" for Allah in a gender-neutral sense will go well with those who are sensitive about gender parity.

More important and helpful are these reader friendly features in his work: i) A detailed note on the structure, style, proper names and pronouns in the Quran (pp. xii-xvi), ii) Answers to some frequently asked questions about Islam, as for example, the link between *Jihad* and terrorism, relevance and aptness of Shariah law, compatibility of Islam with democracy, rights of non-Muslims, abuse of women etc. This elucidation is supplemented with an overview of Prophet Muhammad's teachings about treating everyone fairly and his exhortations for seeking knowledge. This background information prepares readers, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to appreciate better the life-giving contents of the Quran and Sira. iii) In the

contents page listing the titles of 114 Quranic Surahs he has inserted imaginative icons which help readers identify as to which Surahs deal with doctrines, stories and the Unseen, including some which embrace all these three and many more topics. This innovative feature is likely to make readers more receptive and attentive to the study of the Quran.

As to his assigning a theme to a cluster of verses in each Surah, earlier translators too, have unsuccessfully tried their hand at it. A neat thematic classification of Quranic verses is impractical. For, a variety of themes are embedded in these. For example, Khattab places Verses 21-22 of Al-Baqarah under the theme, "Order to worship Allah alone." (p. 3). However, these verses bring out in the main Allah's creative wonders as manifest in the creation of man, earth, sky, rain, fruits and a range of provisions. Likewise, he brands Verses 1-25 of Al-Rahman as the ones spelling out Allah's favours. So doing, he, however, ignores Verses 46-78 of the same Surah which detail many other divine bounties. This exercise of tagging has a very limited value and should better be avoided.

Khattab's translation is both lucid and idiomatic. He performs fairly well the task of conveying faithfully the meaning and message of the Quran in chaste, easy to understand English. In most of the instances he displays his astute alertness to the denotations and connotations of both the Quranic Arabic and English, his target language. Take the following translation of Quranic verses as illustrative:

> But he whose scales are light,
> His matron shall be the Pit:
> (Al-Qariah 101:8-9 Tarif Khalidi's translation p. 519)

Khalidi's above literal translation takes poor readers nowhere. They are left perplexed how to decipher "matron" and "Pit" though these expressions are, in their own right, faithful equivalents of the original Quranic words. Khattab's following rendering is, however, more helpful, containing suggestive clues for readers. And he accomplishes this, without deviating widely from the original:

And as for those who scale is light,
Their home will be the abyss.

(p. 540)

The following instance too, demonstrates how dexterously Khattab translates a verse, with an eye on its circumstantial setting. By comparison, Khalidi's rendering is too vague:

(i) Upon those who believe and do good deeds no blame shall attach *in what they may taste,* so long as they fear God, and believe, and do good deeds;

(Al-Maidah 5:93, Khalidi's translation, p. 94, italics mine)

(ii) There is no blame on those who believe and do good for what they have consumed before [the prohibition] so long as they fear Allah, have faith, and do what is good.

(Khattab's translation, p. 97)

Khattab is very particular about not "giving Allah a distinctively immature, vindictive, and even rueful voice" (p. vii), as is evident from his rendering which is markedly milder than Hammad's:

(i) Yet whoever willfully repeats this violation, then God will *take vengeance* on him. And God is overpowering, *all-avenging* of evil doing

(Al-Maidah 5:95 Hammad's translation, p. 193, italics mine)

(ii) But those who persist will be punished by Allah. And Allah is Almighty, capable of punishment.

(Khattab's translation, p. 98)

However, Khattab seems going a bit too far in playing down the intent of the Quran, as he translates *ghadb,* employed in the concluding verse of Surah Al-Fatihah as "displeased," in place of the more usual "wrath":

A valuable feature of Khattab's work is his brief annotation of things Quranic. His as many as 1324 explanatory notes enable readers to fathom better the Quranic terms, concepts and personalities. More significantly, these notes contextualize the

Quranic message to our time and thus highlight the relevance of the Quranic guidance today. His explanation of the bounties of Paradise (p. 4), Iblis and Jinn (p.5), manna and quails (p.7) Harut and Marut (p. 12), Prophet Jesus's ascension (p. 46) Prophet Muhammad's advent as foretold in the Bible (pp. 135 and 264), and his night journey (p. 227). Gog and Magog (p.247), and Prophet Moses's miracles (p. 236) is perfectly in accord with the consensus viewpoint of *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamah.* It is worth-adding that many of these Quranic descriptions are twisted and distorted under the spell of pseudo-rationalism and apologia by some Muslim translators namely, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Asad and Ahmed Ali. It is therefore all the more gratifying to see Khattab stoutly vindicating the standard Islamic stance. At times, however, he inserts a slightly divergent view, as for example, in his discussion of the following: those violating Sabbath were turned into apes in a metaphorical sense (p. 12), and punishment for apostasy (p. 27).

Khattab's nuanced understanding of the Quran is reflected sharply in his pressing home the Quranic clarion call for social justice, gender quality, and peaceful co-existence with non-Muslims. Equally laudable is his vindication of Prophet Muhammad's marriages, Islamic penal laws and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a role model for all time and place. These affirmations are most likely to assuage the anxiety of some Muslims and non-Muslims regarding these issues. For his cogent exposition of these brings out the life-enriching, eternal message of the Quran.

As already stated, the best part of Khattab's elucidation of the Quran is his laudable concern to address the issues agitating the mind of the present day Muslims, especially those settled in the West. Some instances in point are: i) woman as a witness (p. 38); ii) adherence to taqwa in marital life (p.31); iii) taking unbelievers as allies (p. 43), iv) the Prophet's overflowing love and mercy (p. 53); v) polygamy (p.61); vi) woman's share in inheritance (p.63), vii) treating wife well (p.67); and viii) Islamic penal laws (p.90). Convincingly he vindicates the Islamic stance on these somewhat tricky issues.

Although his English rendering is by and large faithful to the Quranic text, he occasionally interpolates such material which partly clouds the intent of the Quran. For example, the Quranic expression *al-khawalif* (those remaining or sitting behind in Jihad) is translated by him as "*helpless* women" (Al-Tawbah 9:86 and 93, pp. 159 and 160 italics mine). Likewise, he betrays some inconsistency in employing idiomatic English by using such awkward, unhappy expressions as "subdued the land" (p. 147), "Acceptor of repentance" (p. 161) "concerned by your suffering" (p. 164), 'deluded from the truth" (p. 153), "if a blessing befalls you" (p. 155), and "condemnations to the pagans" (p. 273). Although he has drawn upon a range of authentic classical *tafasir* by Ibn Kathir, Al-Qurtubi, Al-Tabari, Al-Shawkani, Al-Razi, Al-Alusi, Al-Baydawi, Al-Zamakhshari and Al-Suyuti, at places, *Israiliyat* (inauthentic *tafsir* reports of the Judaeo-Christian origin) have obfuscated his interpretation (pp. 315 and 328). The absence of page numbers on pp. 524-547, use of Mecca in place of Makkah, and instances of poor transliteration (p. 225) and a typographical error (p. 547) are some minor blemishes which should be rectified in the next edition.

Prefaced to each Surah is a brief introduction, providing a conspectus of its contents and pointing to its *nazm* (thematic continuity) with the following Surah. The extensive Thematic Index (pp. 547-557) will also be used with much profit by readers. However, Khattab's main achievement consists in providing readers of the day with the gems of Quranic guidance in their own preferred idiom. Among the Muslim translators he stands tall for displaying a thorough understanding of the needs of readers. His translation therefore is most likely to win a wide acclaim.

Publication details of the first edition:

Lambard, IL, USA, Furqan Institute of Quranic Education, 2016. pp. 557. ISBN: 978-0-9802469-5-7

64
Kaskas, Safi and David Hungerford
The Quran With References to the Bible
(2016)

The work under study heralds the initiation of a highly welcome and significant chapter in the domain of the Western scholarship on the Quran. This joint venture by two Inter Faith votaries, one Christian and the other Muslim, represents an earnest and much needed move for "reconciliation between all the children of Abraham." Perhaps for the first time we have a work on the Quran which does not harp on its Judaeo-Christian antecedents or brushing aside the Quran as a poor, disgusting imitation of the Bible. The Jewish origin of the Quran has been for centuries the refrain of such leading Orientalists as Baum, Stark, Geiger, Hirschfield, Horvitz, Katsh, Schapiro, Torrey and Speyer. By the same token, for another group of Orientalists namely, Ahrens, Beck, Bell, Margoliouth, Jeffery, Muir, O' Shaughnessy, Watt and Welch, the Quran is made up of material blatantly borrowed from the Christian sources. The Revisionist School goes even a step further, asserting that the Quran owes its origin to the Near Eastern sources. The field has been muddied further by the recent wild assumptions hurled by Lester, Gerd-R Puin and Luxenborg. Since the emergence of the Quran on the scene, the West/Orientalists have by and large refused to accept what the Quran is the Word of God, the latest and final in the series sent down to the Messengers down the millennia. This common source of descent of all Scriptures logically explains the affinity between the Bible and the Quran.

It is gratifying that the work under review has been conceived and executed in the above spirit by endorsing the credentials of the Quran as the final divine revelation and illustrating the commonalities between the two great Scriptures. As many as 3000 Biblical quotations cited in the work bring out the common ground between the Quran and the Bible. It is perhaps the first attempt to

approach the Quran as an ecumenical work which draws the believers together - Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. So doing, the authors understandably do not "emphasize the differences between Islam and other Abrahamic religions (wall-building), but rather emphasize the commonalities (bridge-building)." (p. xiii).

This noble and pious venture thus seeks to undo the devastating damage to Inter Faith relations inflicted by the centuries long tradition of vitriolic polemics. In the Indian subcontinent Rev. Karl G. Pfander's *Mizan al-Haq* (1835) set in motion acerbic polemics, which a leading Muslim scholar, Rahmatullah Kairanawi rebutted in his *Izhar al-Haq* (1864). The Evangelists' charges are refuted also in the *tafsir* corpus of the subcontinent, especially in Abdul Haq Haqqani's *Fath al-Mannan ya Tafsir-i Haqqani* (1887-1900) and Abdul Majid Daryabadi's and Syed Abul Ala Mawdudi's *tafasir*, which came out in 1970s. Apart from refuting the Orientalists' charges against the Quran, they seek also to demonstrate the moral excellence of the Quran over the Bible. As Christian writers refused all along to see any merit in the Quran, in retaliation Muslim scholars too, hardly approached the Bible for building bridges between Islam and Christianity. A whole range of factors - Crusades, phenomenal spread of Islam, colonialism, imperialism, geo-politics, terrorism, Islamophobia and a battle for supremacy etc largely account for the regrettable divide between two major world faith communities.

It is so good to see that the present work does not engage at all in polemics. It avoids discussing such issues raised by the Quran as the Jewish rabbis' misconduct (Al-Baqarah 2:43); ingratitude on their part and their fierce opposition to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Al-Baqarah 2:40-41), their false notions about assured deliverance (Al-Baqarah 2:48), outrageous Christian doctrines about Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) (Ali Imran 3:35-64), the Quranic exoneration of Prophet Aaron and Prophet Solomon, regarding the Biblical charges against them of image-worship of the golden calf and of idolatry respectively (Al-Baqarah 2:51 and 102), concept of merciful, not vindictive, revengeful God

(Al-Baqarah 2:160), humane Quranic norms about the laws of war, menstruating women and divorce (Al-Baqarah 2:201-222 and 228), the doctrine of intercession premised firmly on monotheism (Al-Baqarah 2:255), ethically superior Quranic command about usury (Al-Baqarah 2:275 and 279), the Israelites slaying of Prophets of God (Al-Baqarah 2:61), spiritually rich version of Prophet Jacob's testament (Al-Baqarah 2:133) advent of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) foretold in the Bible and his rejection by the people of the Book (al-Saff 61:06), Quranic comments on Prophet Jesus's sonship and crucifixion (al-Tawbah 9:30 and al-Nisa 4:157) and searching questions posed to the people of the Book (Ali Imran 3:65-66).

An attempt to highlight peaceful coexistence and Inter Faith dialogue brings to mind an earlier, though largely unacknowledged venture, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's *Tabyin al-Kalam fi Tafsir al-Tawrat wa al-Injil 'ala Millat al-Islam* (The Muhammadan Commentary on the Holy Bible) published at Aligarh, India in 1865. In writing it Sir Syed was prompted by his conviction that all faiths deserve equal space and mutual understanding. The Arabic title introduces his work as *tafsir* of the Torah and the Gospels. The use of the specific Muslim theological term, *tafsir* in the context of the Bible underscores Sir Syed's belief that the Bible being one of the Scriptures is to be treated with respect. The same consideration is behind his labelling "the Holy Bible," on the title page. Nonetheless, he makes it a point, at places, to refute some of the Biblical doctrines which are discordant with the Islamic articles of faith. The present work, however, passes in silence over all controversial theological points.

Kaskas's and Hungerford's is, no doubt, "the first known cross-referencing Quran of its kind" (p. xi). Of its 3165 cross-references, almost 90% are from the Bible which supplement and complement things Quranic. Amazingly, all Quranic articles of faith appear with their Biblical endorsement, painstakingly provided by the authors. Take Surah al-Fatiha as an instance in point. It will come as a pleasant surprise to Muslim readers that all the doctrines presented

in this Surah, ranging from the attributes of God to His exclusive dominion on the Day of Judgment, His Oneness and man's obligation to follow the straight way shown by Him are affirmed with a pointed reference to relevant Biblical passages. As a corollary, the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-14) is reproduced (p. 1).

Incredibly enough, this work upholds the doctrine of monotheism on the authority of as many as 9 Biblical passages (p. 31). Equally pleasing it is to note this assertion in the book that the Quran existed as a text in Prophet Muhammad's life time. Even this commonplace is questioned, rather dismissed sneeringly by the Revisionist School of Orientalists. Likewise, all the articles of Islamic faith spelled out in verses 1-13 of Ali Imran related to the revelation of the Book to the Messenger, God's reckoning and Omniscience, His mercy and punishment, and His help for the believers are attested in the light of the Bible (p. 35). However, it cites no Biblical testimony to bear out the Quranic appellation for Mary, "exalted above all women in the worlds." (Ali Imran 3:42), Apropos of Prophet Jesus's several miracles mentioned in Verses 45-49 of Ali Imran, the authors do refer to the Biblical passages dealing with the same (p.3) However, it is not followed by any analysis. Students of comparative religion would have benefitted much from this discussion. The authors, nonetheless, highlight Prophet Jesus's miraculous birth, asserting it to be more special than Prophet Adam's (p. 37), which is incidentally not intended by the Quran. Likewise some comparative notes on the Biblical and Quranic the stance on menstruation (p. 22) and divorce (p.23) would have provided some valuable insights regarding gender issue in the two traditions to readers. Equally surprising is the absence of any comment on Surah al-Kafirun which forbids any coercion in matters of faith and at the same time sets believers poles apart from unbelievers. The Quranic observations on Sonship (p. 121), Prophet Jesus's crucifixion (p. 62) and interrogation of the people of the Book (p. 38) also go unnoticed.

Another remarkable instance of the "cross-referencing" of the Quran is Thomas Cleary's *The Essential Koran* (1993) in which he

identifies the common ground between Budhhism and the Quran. Notwithstanding the similarity in approach, the present work is far more extensive and more significantly, bridges the ever-yawning gap between Christians and Muslims.

Despite the above omissions, this work affords readers a delightful opportunity to realize the vast common ground between the Bible and the Quran. Needless to add, this work will go a very long way in promoting better Christian- Muslim relations, which are needed all the more in our times rocked by deplorable instances of terrorism and Islamophobia. The authors have done the noblest service imaginable to humanity.

While this work serves admirably the above important cause, it does not advance much readers' understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran. For, as already stated, most of the annotations are wedded to the goal of building a bridge between the Bible and the Quran. As a result, many distinctive Quranic terms, concepts, allusions and persons have not received due attention. For example, the bare translation of Surahs al-Duha (93) and al-Sharh (94) makes no mention of the nexus between these two Surahs and Prophet Muhammad's *Sirah*. Nor is there a word about circumstantial setting of Surah al-Fil (105) and al-Kawthar (102). This work, no doubt brings out stoutly the Islamic belief system as embedded in the Quran. However, it neglects almost all else the Quranic parables, miracles, both particular and universal content and context of the Islamic way of life and above all, Prophet Muhammad's pivotal role. The authors have tried their best to compensate for these omissions in the introductory section, "The History of the Quran" (pp. xxi-xxxii) and in "Glossary" (pp. 493-512). Their definition of *deen* (pp. 496-497) underscores, laudably the unity of religions, with Islam as God's final version for humanity. The note on "demon" is a good example of "a different understanding of demons" (p. 497) in the two traditions. The entries in "Glossary" succinctly define a few Quranic terms and concepts, which provide uninitiated readers some idea of the Islamic worldview.

What is, however, distressing is the unpardonable recklessness in production. As a result of which some Quranic Surahs do not appear in full: only 46 verses out of 49 of al-Tur (p.386), 33 out of 36 of al-Mutaffifin (p. 457), 23 out of 26 of al-Ghashiyah (p. 463), and 7 out of 8 of al-Bayyinah (p. 474) appear in the work. No less irksome is the slipshod transliteration of some Quranic Surahs: Lugman for Luqman (pp. 288-291), al-Furgan for al-Furqan (pp. 247-251), al-Ahqat for al-Ahqaf (pp. 365-368), Oaf for Qaf (pp. 379-381), ath-Thariyat for al-Dhariyat (pp. 382-384), al-Waqlah for al-Waqiah (pp. 396-398) as-Saaf for al-Saff (pp. 412-413) al-Zalzaiah for al-Zilzal (pp. 475), and al-Alaql for al-Alaq (p. 472). Some other instances of bizarre mistransliteration and typos are on pp. vii, xvii, 81, 121, 447, 494, 495, 503 and 504. The earlier the publisher rectifies these mistakes, the better it would be for the credibility of such a valuable work which is both a ground-breaking and trend setting work. This enlightening work is destined for wide use for decades to come. Both Kaskas and Hungerford deserve huge appreciation for this noble, scholarly accomplishment.

Publication details of the first edition:

David Hungerford. Fairfax, VA, Bridges of Reconciliation, 2016. pp. 512. ISBN: 978-0-9965924-4-4.

65
The Monotheist Group
The Message: A Translation of the Glorious Quran
(2017)

There is nothing on record about the authors of this new English translation of the Quran. They speak of their work as 'the result of a group effort by people who do not belong to any denomination' (p. i) However, in their zeal to appropriate neutrality, they appear to have gone too far by way of not including even a single explanatory note or any glossary or any other background information about the varied contents of the Quran. They believe that "footnotes and appendices reflect the views of the denomination of the translator" (p.i) It is nothing short of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Readers studying the Quran in its English translation are very much those people who do not have access to Arabic and the rich *tafsir* corpus. It is they who need most some background information about the Quran, its pivotal role in Islam, its worldview, its place in the series of the divine scriptures and its relevance in the cause of the guidance of mankind, including Muslims in today's turbulent world. More importantly, readers should be told briefly about the context and circumstantial setting of both the Quranic Surahs and its verses. Otherwise, how can uninitiated readers make much sense of Surahs Al-Duha, Al-Sharh, Al-Fil, Al-Kawthar, Abasa, Quraish, Al-Masad, Al-Rum, Luqman, Yunus, Yusuf, Hud, Ibrahim etc? How can they decipher on their own numerous Quranic references to persons, places, concepts, and terms? It is naïve on the translators' part to assume that a bare translation can 'let the text speak for itself and deliver to the reader a rendition of the pure message of the Quran' (p. i)

Notwithstanding the deliberate omission of explanatory notes, the peculiar mindset of the Monotheist group does come out even in

this bare translation, underscoring their strange mental reservations, their unusual predilections and instances of their eccentricity and idiosyncrasy. For example, they rule out the use of Surah titles, a convention which has been followed since the revelation of the first Quranic Surah. It is common knowledge that Surah titles are tags to indicate the occurrence of a particular event, person, or object in that particular Surah, yet these titles are excellent user-friendly reference points which help in recognizing and distinguishing Surahs. The translation under study, however, contains no Surah titles at all. Surah Al-Baqarah features as mere Surah Number 2, and Ali Imran as Number 3, and so on. It is hard to endorse their view that these titles being 'later insertions' must be removed and that this will by any stretch of imagination help 'maintain the authenticity of the revealed text' (p. ii). The diacritical marks and the division of the Quranic texts into various units (*juz, ruku,* and *manzil*) too are "later insertions." Such hypersensitivity to non-issues should better be avoided. The translators' obsession with non-issues is evident also from their highlighting 'the slight variations between existing printed versions' (p. iv) of the Quranic text, which pertain mostly to some minor variants in the orthography of a few words and the exact location of pauses within some verses. Such reckless statements could confuse, mislead, or even prejudice unsuspecting readers. This discussion is all the more irrelevant and unnecessary in this particular work which does not carry the Arabic text of the Quran.

Contained in their Introduction is a list of the 'Quran initials' (p. vi) which are better known as *Al-huruf al-muqattat* (the Abbreviated Letters) which preface 29 Quranic surahs. Instead of explaining these, the translators are content with recording only this unhelpful observation: "We leave it to the reader to examine this phenomenon and come to his/her own conclusion" (p. vii) It is baffling to note that the translators do not encourage the study of the Quran in its original Arabic. Rather, they maintain: "Language is not a barrier to its understanding" (p. vii)

While imitating the modernist translators of the Quran namely, Ahmad Ali and Leila Bakhtiar, these translators too, twist the import of Verse 34 of Al-Nisa, which is related to tackling a disobedient, rebellious wife. For them, the Quranic command idribuhun means: "Letting the wife isolated and temporarily separate from her husband." (p. xi) Likewise, the translators have serious reservations about the application of Quranic hudud (penal laws). The Quranic command for *iqta* (amputation of the hand of a thief) (Al-Maida 5:38) is branded as a 'mindless act of violence.' (p. xiv) Given this, it is not surprising to find their vituperative attack directed against religious authorities who are condemned for 'the misinformation and ignorance that has been taught for many generations.' (p. xvi)

Not only is this work devoid of explanatory notes, but also its bare translation is liable to confound readers with such bizarre English renderings as "focal point" for Qibla (p. 13), "sacred Temple" for Al-Masjid *Al-Haram* (p. 13), "contribution towards purification" for zakah (p. 14), "guardians" for *malaika* (p. 437), "valuable system" for Al-Din (p. 438), "fiery projectiles" for *Al-Hijarah* (p. 442) and "fire-maker" as the translation of the proper name, Abu Lahab (p. 443)

The work is vitiated further by regrettable instances of mistranslation betraying the translators' inability to present the correct version of the following verses in English: Al-Sharh 94:1, Al-Alaq 96:7, and Al-Qariah 101:9. Instances of awkward transliteration are galore, as for example, "Haamaan, Malaek, and Irum" etc.

As this translation does not facilitate and advance the understanding of the meaning and message of the Quran in any way, it cannot be recommended for study.

Publication details of the first edition:

USA, Brainbow Press, 2017. pp 455, ISBN: 0-9796715-4-X

66
Bleher, Sahib Mustaqim
The Wise Quran
(2018)

Sahib Mustaqib Beleher (b.1959), a German new Muslim, embarked upon this translation project in order to fill some gaps which he noted in the existing English translations of the Quran. Amid his several publications and translations in both German and English are his revised versions of Pickthall's and Abdullah Yusuf Ali's works. Strangely enough, however, in his Preface he has not spelled out the nature, parameters and range of his revision. Certainly this exercise must have impelled him to bring out his own translation.

Since his work is bereft of annotations and any other explanatory material, his Preface alone sheds some light on his mindset and his approach to the art and craft of the Quran translation. He justifiably disapproves some earlier literal translations and those couched in archaic English. These do not take readers far in helping them grasp the life-giving message of the Quran. He has therefore tried to make the Quran's "guidance and wisdom reach as large an audience as possible." (p.5). Notwithstanding his pious intention, in the absence of any explanatory note, introduction to the contents of Surahs and glossary, how can uninitiated readers benefit? Take as Bleher's literal translation of Abu Lahab, Prophet Muhammad's inveterate enemy as "the father of flame" (p.325), without a word on his identity and wicked deeds. Likewise, he renders *al-kawthar* as "abundance" (p.324). Though it is a literally accurate rendering, it does not define it as a fountain in Paradise granted to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on the Day of Judgement. His Index (pp.326-352) lists hundreds of Quranic personalities, events, terms and concepts. How can readers decipher these? Worse, he does not provide any Bibliography which may direct them to draw upon some authentic sources in English or Arabic for self study.

Without any reference to Sirah, tafsir related Ahadith and tafasir, a meaningful study of the Quran is not possible. His decision to omit any explanatory material and restrict his work to a bare translation can hardly be condoned. He is severely critical of the translators who "stay close to the original" (p.6). The text under translation is none other than the Word of Allah. Any deviation from it is something outrageous. A translator may certainly take some liberty in conveying the original in English idiom and usage. However, faithfulness to the text should not be compromised, which Bleher tends to suggest in his zeal as an effective translator. Being an accomplished translator himself he knows the Italian adage: *traduttore, traditore* (a translator is a traitor).

It is hard to endorse his flawed, nay skewed observation: "Whilst the Quran is the foundation of Islam; it is not possible to learn everything about Islam exclusively from the Quran, less so from a translation, and an exploration of the meanings of key Islamic terms will need to be pursued elsewhere." (p.7). Ahmad Zaki Hammad, Mustafa Khattab and Tarif Khalidi in particular, and a host of other English translators of the Quran have been remarkably successful in getting readers acquainted with the basic Islamic and Quranic knowledge. His advice to seek such vital information "elsewhere" is too vague and hazardous.

His predilection for domestication in his translation by way of preferring English idioms and metaphors to the original ones in the Quranic Arabic is almost misplaced. While a translator is entitled to some liberty, his rendering *jamal* (camel) in the Quran for a rope betrays recklessness and pseudo-rationalism. Equally naïve and tendentious is his preference for the principle, "let the text speak for itself" while rejecting the centuries old, helpful strategy of providing annotations based on authentic material. Take his translation of Surah Al-Qadar as an instance in point:

"1. We revealed it during the night of destiny. 2. And now how do you know what the night of destiny. 3. The night of destiny is better than a thousand months. 4. The angels and the Spirit descend during

it by the permission of their Lord with affairs. It means peace until the start of day break." (Al-Qadar 94:1-5, p. 322)

It naturally raises these questions. What and when is this night of destiny? How and why it is better than one thousand months? Likewise Surah 93 and 94 are directly addressed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), consoling and comforting him and citing various bounties conferred upon him. Why is the Prophet's morale boosted? Which favours were done to him? Bleher's annotations would have satisfied readers' queries and persuaded them of the eloquence and other hallmarks of the Quran. His disregard for the Quranic content and context is unreasonable.

His translation, bereft of the Quranic text and annotations is of little use for English readership, the majority of which is new to the Quran. It is beyond one how and why a competent translator and *dawah* activist like Bleher did not realize readers' needs. For his work meets none of these.

Details of the first edition:

Islamic Dawah Cent International. www.idci.co.uk. 2018. pp.352. ISBN: 978-1-910432-03-7

67
Salahi, Adil
The Quran: A Translation for the 21st Century
(2019)

The subtitle of this work is a misleading one. Howe can a bare translation, bereft of explanatory notes, glossary and other reader-friendly aids, cater to the needs of eth 21st century readers? They would like to draw upon on a Quran translation which relates the eternal, life-giving message of the Quran to their concerns and issues staring them in the face— Islamophobia, terrorism in the name of Islam, gender parity, LGBTQ+OA, Pluralism, nation states, Muslims as a minority in today's nation-states, geopolitics of the day in the face of the routine destruction of the Muslim world by the belligerent Western foreign policy, the global rise of the right wing political outfits which are entrenched in Islam-bashing, Inter Faith dialogue, repressive and monarchies in the Muslim world, incompatibility of democracy with Islam and the overall plight of the Muslim *ummah* in today's world. His 800+ pages long work carries only a handful of explanatory notes, 17 to be precise. So it is a travesty to claim that it can guide the present generation of English speaking readers who are new to the Quran. How can they grasp the purport of hundreds of the Quranic terms, concepts, persons, places and events, without being provided with any background material? Salahi's insensitivity to this genuine problem is bewildering. Audaciously enough, he tries to justify his inadequacy: "I have kept footnotes to the minimum, so as to allow the text to deliver its own message."(p.22). How will his literal translation help readers identify hundreds of Quranic allusions and intertextuality? Take only Surahs only Al-Duha and Al-Shrah as instances in point: Who is reassured of divine help? Why is his comforted? Which favours were done to him? Whose heart was opened? What was the burden which weighed heavily on his back? How has he been granted high renown? Salahi's Index (pp.770-

799) lists 100s of Quranic terms and concepts which have gone unexplained, as for example, Ansar, alms, several battles, Byzantines, *zihar*, Iblis, Gog and Magog, Harut and Marut, Muhajirun, zakat, pilgrimage, Ramadan, Sabbath, *sijjin* and usury. Same holds true of many Quranic personalities who remain obscure for readers.

The present work is the rehash of the author's brilliant and conscientious English translation of Syed Qutb's monumental *tafsir, Fi Zilal Al-Quran* entitled *In the Shade of the Quran* in 18 volumes brought out by the Islamic Foundation, Leicester between 2000 and 2010. Salahi has been regularly writing on Sirah and other Islamic topics and his works enjoy wide circulation. It is therefore shocking that he who owes allegiance to the devout Islamic scholar, Syed Qutub follows brazenly in the footsteps of the liberals/Feminists/apologestics like Ahmed Ali and Laleh Bakhtiar in twisting the import of Verse 34 of Al-Nisa in his annotation. While he correctly translates *wa-dribuhunn* as "beat them," he confounds readers with presenting some far-fetched meanings of this Quranic expression, insisting that "*wa-dribuhunn* is used here in the sense of separation, rather than any physical punishment. This separation means that the husband stays away from the family home for a few days" (p.131). He thus interpolates his whimsical view, timorously discarding Allah's directive. Less disturbing, yet irksome are the following defects of this work: it is devoid of the Quran text. Both the author and the publisher should rectify this serious lacuna in the next edition. Salahi has not provided even the Quranic/Arabic Surah titles; only their English versions have been used throughout the work. Such foreignization will deter readers from drawing closer to the Quran in original.

As already stated, his annotation is not cognate with his ambitious venture. His explanatory notes are too few and too brief. For example, his note that "Iblis is Satan's name" (p.72) does not help readers in any way. An oddity in the work is the appearance of "Contents" at the end of the work (pp.801-805), being an imitation of works in Arabic.

Prefaced to the translation is his brief "Introduction" (pp.10-24) touching upon some commonplaces about the Quran. He throws light on its divine origin period of revelation, collection and codification. Apty enough, he points to the pivotal position which the Quran holds in the life of Muslims while citing Syed Qutb's masterly work, *Artistic Imagery in the Quran*, he draws attention to some of the linguistic and marvels of the Quran as a masterpiece. He is off the mark in speaking of George Sale's as the first English translation of the Quran in 1734. This distinction is held by Alexander Ross in 1649. Likewise, he reckons the total number of English translations to be in the "double figure." This enigmatic statement is misleading, for it may range from 10 to 99. Actually, there are more than 150 complete English translation; I have published reviews on around 120 of these. He refers only to the English versions by A. J. Arberry, N.J. Dawood, Abdullah Yusuf Ali and M. M. Pickthall. These are dated, 80-100 years old works. Inexplicably enough, he does not say a word some recent brilliant ones by Ahmad Zaki Hammad, Mustafa Khattab and Tarif Khalidi.

Salahi's work, being a mere translation, devoid of explanatory notes, does not and cannot advance readers, understanding of the Quran.

Details of the first edition:

Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK. 2019. Pp. 805, ISBN: 978-0-86037-725-2

68
Alrabi, Atbae
The Quran an English Translation
(2020)

Review

A weird and totally unacceptable practice in the field of English translation of the Qur'an by some people is blatant plagiarism. Their plagiarism consists in lifting an earlier translation word-for-word and passing it off as their own, new and rather original contribution to the field. Out of around 100 translations that I have scrutinized, the following belong to this category:

1. Majestic Quran (2000) by the Translation Committee consists of big chunks of material taken without any acknowledgment from M. M. Pickthall (1930) and Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934–1937).
2. Syed Vickar Ahamed's translation (2005) is regrettably an instance of plagiarism in that it draws heavily, rather word for word, on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's (1934–1937).
3. Leila Bakhtiar (2007) has borrowed material from A. J. Arberry's The KoranInterpreted (1995).
4. M. Sharif Chaudhary's (2010) is based largely on Pickthall's translation (1930).
5. Peachy and Johani's work (2012) is derived, once again, from Pickthall's.
6. Jibouri's (2014) betrays the translator's borrowings from Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934–37).

The latest addition to this reprehensible category is the translation under review which is a word-by-word copy of Ali Quli Qarai's The Quran (London, ICAS, 2004). Only two passages are cited as proof.

1. Alif, Lam, Mim.1. This is the Book, there is no doubt in it, a guidance to the Godwary
2. Who believe in the Unseen, maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them;
3. and who believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you, and are certain of the Hereafter.
4. Those follow their Lord's guidance and it is they who are the felicitous.
5. As for the faithless, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith.
6. God has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight, and there is a great punishment for them.
7. Among the people are those who say, 'We have faith in God and the Last Day,' but they have no faith.
8. They seek to deceive God and those who have faith, yet they deceive no one but themselves, but they are not aware.
9. There is a sickness in their hearts; then God increased their sickness, and there is a painful punishment for them because of the lies they used to tell.
10. When they are told, 'Do not cause corruption on the earth,' they say, 'We are only reformers!'

(Alrabi, *Al-Baqarah* 2: 1–11, p. 9)1. Alif, Lam, Mim.

1. This is the Book, there is no doubt in it, a guidance to the Godwary,
2. Who believe in the Unseen, and maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them;
3. and who believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you, and are certain of the Hereafter.
4. Those follow their Lord's guidance, and it is they who are the felicitous.

5. As for the faithless, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith.
6. Allah has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight, and there is a great punishment for them.
7. And among the people are those who say, 'We have faith in Allah and the Last Day,' but they have no faith.
8. They seek to deceive Allah and those who have faith, yet they deceive no one but themselves, but they are not aware.
9. There is a sickness in their hearts; then Allah increased their sickness, and there is a painful punishment for them because of the lies they used to tell.
10. When they are told, 'Do not cause corruption on the earth,' they say, 'We are only reformers!'

(Qarai, *Al-Baqarah* 2: 1–11, p.2–3)B) Ha, Mim.

1. The gradual sending down of the Book is from God, the All-mighty, the All-knowing,
2. forgiver of sins and acceptor of repentance, severe in retribution, yet allbountiful; there is no god except Him and toward Him is the destination.
3. No one disputes the signs of God except the faithless. So do not be misled by their bustle in the towns.
4. The people of Noah denied before them and the heathen factions who came after them. Every nation attempted to lay hands on their apostle and disputed erroneously to refute the truth. Then I seized them; so how was My retribution?!
5. That is how the word of your Lord became due concerning the faithless, that they shall be inmates of the Fire.
6. Those who bear the Throne and those who are around it celebrate the praise of their Lord and have faith in Him, and they plead for forgiveness for the faithful: 'Our Lord! You

embrace all things in Your mercy and knowledge. So forgive those who repent and follow Your way and save them from the punishment of hell.

7. Our Lord! Admit them into the Gardens of Eden, which You have promised them, along with whoever is righteous among their forebears, their spouses and their descendants. Indeed, You are the All-mighty, the All-wise.

8. Save them from the ills of the Day of Resurrection, and whomever You save from the ills that day, You will have had mercy upon him, and that is a mighty triumph.'

9. It will be proclaimed to the faithless: 'Surely God's outrage towards you is greater than your outrage towards yourselves, as you were invited to faith, but you disbelieved.'

(Alrabi, *Ghafir* 40: 1–10, p. 278)

1. Ha. Mim.

2. The [gradual] sending down of the Book is from Allah, the All-mighty, the All-knowing,

3. Forgiver of sins and acceptor of repentance, severe in retribution, [yet] all bountiful, there is no god except Him, [and] toward Him is the destination.

4. No one disputes the signs of Allah except the faithless. So do not be misled by their bustle in the towns.

5. The people of Noah denied before them and the [heathen] factions [who came] after them. Every nation attempted to lay hands on their apostle, and disputed erroneously to refute the truth. Then I seized them; so how was my retribution?!

6. That is how the word of your Lord became due concerning the faithless, that they shall be inmates of the Fire.

7. Those who bear the Throne, and those around it, celebrate the praise of their Lord and have faith in Him, and they plead for forgiveness for the faithful: 'Our Lord! You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge. So forgive those who repent

and follow Your way and save them from the punishment of hell.

8. Our Lord! Admit them into the Gardens of Eden, which You have promised them, along with whoever is righteous among their forebears, their spouses and their descendants. Indeed You are the All-mighty, the All-wise.

9. Save them from the ills; and whomever You save from the ills that day, You will have had mercy upon him, and that is the great success.

10. Indeed it will be proclaimed to the faithless: 'Surely Allah's outrage [towards you] is greater than your outrage towards yourselves, as you were invited to faith, but you disbelieved.'

(Qarai, *Ghafir* 40: 1–10, p. 657–659)

Not only Qarai's English translation of the Qur'anic text, as is evident from the above glaring instances, Alrabi has brazenly copied all Qarai's explanatory notes, though a few are his own, to which we will come back later. The Bibliography too, is taken from Qarai's work.

Since it is a replica of Qarai's translation, which has already been reviewed by me in the MWBR, only the main points are recapitulated below.

The first and foremost point is that it is a sectarian, Shiah interpretation of the Qur'an. Every school of thought is fully entitled to hold and express the views peculiar to it. However, in a translation of the Word of Allah, every translator is obliged to state clearly their ideological stance, for the unscrupulous translators superimpose their sectarian and whimsical presuppositions on the Qur'anic text and parade their own notions as the intended meaning and message of Allah. This may misguide the unsuspecting readers who have access to the original Qur'anic/Arabic text only through their translations. Such readers are at the mercy of these translators for gaining their (mis)understanding of the Qur'an. To the best of my knowledge, so far the only complete English translations

representing the Shi'ah belief system have been done by: 1) S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali (1964). 2) M. H. Shakir (1968), Muhammad Baqir Behbudi (1997) and Ali Quli Qarai (2004). Of these, only S. V. Mir Ahmad Ali declares his sectarian slant on the title page of his translation thus: *The Holy Quran with English Translation of the Arabic text and Commentary according to the Version of the Holy Ahlul-Bait.* Such a statement of intent is laudable, for it does not mislead readers. Otherwise, scores of English translations by Orientalists, Qadyanis, sectarian and un-Islamic ideology-driven individuals and groups are freely available in market and libraries, and now increasingly on the Internet, which undermine, discredit and distort altogether the Islamic articles of faith and practices, the illustrious role and character of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) and his Companions and other Islamic sanctities.

According to Qarai, and his copyist Alrabi, the Qur'anic text affirms the following typical Shiah beliefs:

The excellence of *Ahl Al-Bayt* (the Prophet's family consisting only of (Ali, Fatimah and their children) in 83 Qur'anic verses.

The virtues of Ali ibn Abi Talib in 113 Qur'anic verses

The condemnation of the Umayyads in 15 Qur'anic verses.

The greatness of Fatimah and her descendants in 26 Qur'anic verses.

The concept of Imamah in 17 Qur'anic verses.

Reference to Imam al-Husayn in 4 Qur'anic verses.

Reference to Imam al-Mahdi in 40 Qur'anic verses.

Reference to *Imamah* and *walayah* in 60 Qur'anic verses.

Reference to the deniers of *imamah* in 68 Qur'anic verses. False claimants of *Imamah* in 86 Qur'anic verses Followers of the Imam in 73 Qur'anic verses. (For details see Qarai, pp. 877–938 and Alrabi, pp. 407–434)

For the students of the Qur'an, this account of the labyrinthine superstructure of Shi'ah beliefs with their Qur'anic moorings may strike one as a revelation in itself.

Notwithstanding the fairly good level of the English idiom employed by Qarai; his rendering, and hence of Alrabi too, is marred by the use of some archaic, even unintelligible English words, as for example, baseborn, forward, Godwariness, Godwary, Gooddoers, plantains. The use of such uncommon and dated words may put off readers, rather than attract them to reading this translation. Equally unacceptable is his use of the term "Apostle" for the Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him). In view of its different overtones in the Bible, this term does not befit a Messenger or Prophet of Allah. Qarai/Alrabi do not elucidate the Qur'an in today's context, which is another serious shortcoming. Rather, their focus in the explanatory notes is on historical and doctrinal issues alone.

Although Alrabi has borrowed the contents of his work from Qarai, without any acknowledgment, he has contributed, to the best of my knowledge, only six explanatory notes. The first one is in the acerbic sectarian vein. The Qur'an posits *al-shajarah al-malunah,* the accursed tree, i.e. *zaqqum*, as an odious, unpalatable fruit for the inmates of Hell in *al-Isra'* 17:60. Without any regard for context, Alrabi, however, presents it as a 'referring to the Umayyad clan, who persecuted the Prophet for more than a decade… and within a generation after his sad demise seized control of the Islamic state established by him, turning it into a hereditary monarchy, subverting the *sunnah* and Quranic norms … ushering in an era of despotic rule and a culture of submission which has lasted for than (sic) a millennium and continues to cast its dark shadow over the political situation throughout the Islamic world' (pp. 458–459). His explanatory note on the concept of *walayah* is, however, free from any sectarian colouring, notwithstanding this being a characteristic Shiah belief that brings to mind Khomeini's *wilayat-i faqih* doctrine (p. 473). Like Qarai, he names the Prophet Muhammad's wives Hafsah and A'ishah in the context of the

tahrim incident, which the Qur'an cites without naming any name (*al-Tahrim* 66: 1–4). Going a step further, he brands it as 'an ominous conspiracy' (p. 489). Needless to add that the sectarian divide is to the fore in projecting these daughters of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and Umar ibn al-Khattab who were the Prophet's holy wives as the villain of the piece.

More audacious is his rendering of *Surah al-Duha* on the authority of the Imams of the Prophet's family!": 'Did He not find you unique and unmatched (*yatiman*) among His creatures and so made you the resort and refuge of your people? Did He not find you lost amongst a people who did not know your worth and then guided them towards you? Did He not find you as one responsible for sustaining and guiding a community and enriched it through you?' (p. 496). Alrabi's above views find their echo in the English translations of the Qur'an by these Barelwi writers: Shah Faridul Haque (1988), Abdul Majeed Auolakh (1990), and Tahirul Qadri (2011).

Alrabi's sectarian zeal once again surfaces in his misconstruing the thrust of verses 7–8 of *al-Sharh* directing the Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) to: 'Appoint your successor to lead the community after you' (p. 496). What he implies is that the Qur'an pointedly asked the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) to designate Ali as his successor which he did not do. Likewise, he takes the Qur'anic expression, '*al-Naim*' (*al-Takathur* 102: 8) as 'the teaching related to *tawhid*, prophethood and the *walayah* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Imams of his family' (p. 497).

Such sectarian ebullition apart, Alrabi's work is a repulsive example of unpardonable plagiarism and hence should be dismissed with the contempt which it deserves.

Details of the first edition:

Amazon Digital Services, KD Print, pp. 536, ISBN: 9798633743418

69
Assami, Emily et.al.
The Qur'an: English Meanings
(2020)

The history of English translations of the Qurʾān by women scholars is fairly new. To the best of my knowledge, so far the following 13 women translators have embarked on this venture singly or jointly in producing complete English translations of the Qurʾān: (1) Jamal-un-Nisa bint Rafai (1984-1992), (2) Ahmad Zidan and Dina Zidan (1991), (3) Umm Muhammad, Amatullah Bentley and Mary Kennedy (1997), (4) Aisha Bewley and Abdalhaqq Bewley (1999), (5) Tahereh Safarzadeh (2001), (6) Amatul Rahman Omar and Abdul Mannan Omar (2005), (7) Laleh Bakhtiar (2007), (8) Martha Schulte Nafey along with Edip Yuksel and Layth Saleh Al-Shaiban (2009), (9) Maria Massi Dakake as part of the team that produced The Study Quran (2015), (10) Jane Dammen McAuliffe (2017), (11) Shehnaz Shaykh and Kausar Khatri (2020), (12) Emma Williams (2020), and (13) Linda Ilham Barto (2020).

The translation under review is a nominally revised edition of the original which first appeared in 1997, without specifying the names of these three translators, and ascribing the authorship of the work to Saheeh International, a publishing unit of the Saudi publisher, Dar Abul Qasim. These three women are American scholars associated with this publishing house. They embraced Islam and devoted themselves to disseminating the message of Islam in English. Together they have produced scores of books on Islam. This Qurʾān translation, nonetheless, takes pride of place for them. Being a faithful English version of the Qurʾān in chaste English and supplemented with helpful, though very brief, explanatory notes, it has been a highly successful translation which has been re-issued several times.

First a word about the differences between the first 1997 edition and the present slightly revised edition. The following sections have been added to this new edition: Introduction (pp. i-iv), a rehashed Foreword (pp. v-vii), and Merits of Particular Surahs and Verses (pp. x-xii). The 1997 edition includes 2017 notes whereas the present edition has 1885. What is important is that the translation of the Qurʾānic text, notes and Subject Index are identical in both editions and, hence, this new edition is only a nominally revised version.

Essentially this translation is for daʿwah to both Muslims and non-Muslims, for it faithfully states the meaning and message of the Qurʾān without delving into quasi-philosophical, juristic or linguistic issues. The aim was to produce "a correct, clear translation in a readable and uncomplicated expression" (p.i).

Throughout the work, the translators have expounded the "aqeedah (creed/stance) of Ahl Al-Sunnah wa Al-Jama'ah." They "let the Quran speak for itself, adding footnotes only where deemed necessary" (p.i). The explanatory notes are culled from Ibn Kathīr's Tafsīr. It is gratifying that in their elucidation, the translators have shunned altogether corrupted Biblical reports (Isrāʾīliyyāt). Conscientiously enough, they have employed parentheses when including such extra-Qurʾānic material which facilitates a better understanding of the text. In doing so, they were able to explicate Qurʾānic ellipsis, pronominal shifts, allusions, terms and concepts. For example, in articulating the import of verse 102 of Al-Baqarah, they have inserted 7 parenthetical statements (p.14). In their rendering of both the Qurʾānic text and its meaning, they have followed Ibn Taymiyyah's dictum: There should be no allegorization (majāz), denial (taʿṭīl), probing al-Ghayb (takyīf) or anthropomorphism (tamthīl) in interpreting the Qurʾān (p.iv).

In their Preface (pp. v-vii), the translators do well in spelling out the benefits of studying the Qurʾān. Readers gain a clear concept of their Creator, the purpose of their lives, the eternal Hereafter, particularly their answerability to Allah for their beliefs and actions in this life and, thus, they become aware of the Straight Path to be followed in this life by discharging their obligations to Allah and

fellow human beings. And since the Qurʾān is a book of eternal guidance, it directs people towards the path of success and happiness in both worlds. The note on the "History of Quran Compilation" (pp. viii-ix) is both accurate and informative.

Although the work includes 2017 notes, these are one-liners, explaining more clearly the intent of the Qurʾānic verses. Although these are reader-friendly, they do not engage with any issue agitating their mind, as for example, Gender parity, LGTBQ, globalization, interfaith relations, governance and the numerous ailments afflicting the socio-moral and religious life of Muslims nowadays. Laleh Bakhtiar, the feminist translator of the Qurʾān, as well as others, have misconstrued the meaning of verse 34 of al-Nisāʾ and ferociously criticized what they deemed to be a patriarchal reading of the Qurʾān in the Tafsīr corpus. The present translators have not addressed this vehement charge nor have they clarified that the seemingly misogynist observations in verse 18 of al-Zukhruf were the views of the Arab polytheists of the day, not the stance of the Qurʾān. It is expected that these highly educated western authors would take up some of the tricky concerns in their next edition and address Bakhtiar's sweeping, scathing denunciation that "for over 14 centuries Muslim men have misinterpreted the Quran" and the feminist grudge that the Qurʾān endorses the repression of women.

The authors, nonetheless, deserve accolades for their faithful, easy-to-understand articulation of the meaning and message of the Qurʾān in idiomatic English. An extensive Subject Index appended to the work is another valuable reader friendly feature in this translation. A glossary explaining some major Qurʾānic concepts, terms, persons and places would have enhanced the worth of this commendable translation which stands out as the best English translation of the Qurʾān among the 13 such ventures produced by women.

70
Barto, Linda Iham and Pandor, Sheik Ahmed
The Universal Message
(2020)

Linda Iham Barto was born into an American Christian family. After her studies she joined US Air force. Both she and her husband served army for more than a decade. In 1999 the couple embraced Islam. The full title of Barto's and Pandor's venture is *A Universal Message Interpreted from the Holy Quran*. Barto has authored some other books on Islam. A special mention should be made of her following work which is anchored in Pluralism and Inter Faith understanding: *The Bible and the Quran at the Edge of Renaissance: A Judeo-Christian-Muslim Compass to a World of Peace* (2009). Her inter Faith sensitivity is geared towards cohesion while upholding the diversity of world religions.

She introduces the Quran as the Word of All Wise and All Aware Lord, with reference to Verse 1 of Surah Hud. She has attempted at bringing out an easy, simple version of the Quran suited for the needs and level of young readers. However, it caters well to other sections of readership. Her main objective is to bring home the universal, humane message of the Quran resting on the planks of peaceful coexistence, charity, piety and integrity.

Her concern for readers' needs and their mental and psychological level is praiseworthy. Many of the ventures in this field, though well intentioned, fail to deliver goods. Either they presuppose a fairly high degree of competence in Arabic on the part of readers and hence their discussion on the nuances of Arabic idiom and usage, which is generally beyond the ken of ordinary readers. Or they suppose readers to possess previous knowledge of the Quranic worldview, its terminology, its historical setting and its wide ranging allusions. As a result, readers do not and cannot derive

sufficient benefit from their study of a bare translation of the Quranic text.

Barto's is a welcome step in the right direction, which is likely to yield the intended result.

Publication details of the first edition:

Light Switch Press, Kindle edition. 2020. pp. 612. ISBN: 19532 84051.

71
CoreQuran.com
Quran Arabic English: Sharp and Easy to Read
(2020)

This online venture does not specify its author or his credentials. Though it might sound bewildering, it does not carry any foreword, preface or introduction. The work opens directly and abruptly with the English translation of the Quranic text. In the absence of any background information, readers get no idea about the translator's objectives, his credentials justifying his embarking upon such an ambitious project as the rendering the Word of Allah into English. The work consists of only the translation of the text, to the exclusion of any annotation, glossary or appendix. As a result it suffers from several lacunae. First, such a bare work, restricted only to the English rendering of the Arabic original is of little use for those new to the Quran. It goes without saying that the overwhelming majority of readers consult an English translation for gaining some idea of Islam/the Quran and the Prophet (peace be upon him). If they fail to derive some useful information, their study of translation alone would not help or guide them. Furthermore, one gets no clue about the translator's mindset, his approach to the Quran and his attempt to relate the eternal message of the Quran to the issues of the day, if he does not provide any prefatory note or explanatory material.

True, this translation as promised, is "easy to read" as it is in "clear simple English." Illustrative of this quality are the following examples:

i. "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. The Compassionate, the Merciful. Master of the Day of Judgement. You alone we worship, and upon You, we call for help. Guide us along the

straight path. The path of those You have blessed, not those with anger on them, nor the misguided."

(Al-Fatihah 1:1-7, pp.9-10)

ii. And when it is said to them, Believe in what Allah has revealed, they say, "we believe in what was revealed to us." And they deny what came afterword, although it is the truth, confirming what they have. Say, "Then why did you murder Allah's prophets before if you are believers?"

(Al-Baqarah 2:91, p.42)

iii. Allah burdens no soul beyond it capacity. To its credit is what it earns, and against it is what it commits. "O our Lord, do not condemn us if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord, do not burden us as you have burdened those before us."

(Al-Baqarah 2:286, p.129)

These examples illustrate the translator's competence in conveying faithfully the import of the Quran in simple, elegant English. However, he has been unable to maintain consistently fidelity to the original. At places, he has slightly strayed into error. For example, his rendering of Surahs Al-Sharh and Al-Lahab is marred by the use of some inaccurate equivalents of the Quranic expressions.

On the whole, it is nonetheless a reliable English version which makes a fluent reading. However, it does not have any reader-friendly feature and fails in facilitating readers' understanding of the Quran. It is hoped the next edition would fill he serious gaps by way of providing basic background information about the Quran.

Details of the first edition:
e-edition. www.corequran.com. 2020, pp.1803

72
Rowad Translation Centre
The Noble Quran
(2020)

Although the full title of this work reads as the "Explanation of the Meanings of the Noble Quran in the English Language," it contains only a bare translation. There is no attempt at "explanation of the meanings of the Quran." Nor does it direct readers to any background material which may facilitate their better understanding. Rowad Translation Centre based in Saudi Arabia has been engaged for years in publishing and distributing Quran translations in various languages which is undoubtedly a noble service in the cause of the Quran. In so doing, they have been reinforcing the mission of the King Fahd Quran Printing Complex, Madina, Saudi Arabia, that has brought out quality translations of the Quran in world languages. The Rowad Centre has published Quran translations into the following languages: Fula (a West and Central African language), English, Bosnian, Tamil, Serbian and Lithuanian. Moreover, the range of their publications on Islamic articles of faith, Sirah, Hadith and other Islamic topics is impressively wide.

"Introduction" sheds light on their pious intention: "The Noble Quran is the speech of Allah Almighty… As non-Arabic speakers exceed 90% of the world population, it is impossible to convey the Quran and its meanings, arguments, evidence and miraculousness to them, except through proficient translations in their respective languages." (p.9) Driven by the same lofty consideration, the Centre has presented this English translation.

This version is markedly close to the earlier ventures originating from Saudi Arabia: i) *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Quran in the English Language* by Muhammad Taqi-ud Din Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan (1977) and ii) *The Quran: English Meaning* by Saheeh International (translated by Emily Assami,

Amatulah Bantley and Mary Kennedy) (1997). The following sample, the translation of Surah Al-Ikhlas in all these three translation will help readers gain a better idea of their relative merits and demerits:

- Say (O Muhammad (peace be upon him)): "He is Allah (the) One. Allah As-Samad (the Self-Sufficient Master Whom all the creatures need. He neither eats nor drinks).

  He begets not, nor was He begotten.

  And there is no co-equal or comparable unto Him. (Hilali and Khan, p.973)

- Say: "He is Allah [who is] One,

  Allah, the Eternal Refuge.

  He neither begets nor is born,

  Nor is there to Him any equivalent.

  (Saheeh International, p.658)

- Say: He is Allah, the One

  Allah, the Eternal Refuge.

  He neither begets nor is He begotten.

  And there is none comparable to Him.

  (Rowad Translation Centre, p.663)

It defies commonsense why the Centre, devoted to the dissemination of the message of the Quran, has disregarded altogether readers' needs. Being new to Islam/Quran they should be familiarized with the content and context of the Quran. Otherwise a translation alone would not suffice for them. In the next edition the publisher should cull suitable material from their publication, *The Quran Encyclopedia* and annotate the present work which would be something meaningful and rewarding for readers.

Details of the first edition:

Rowad Translation Centre, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. 2020. pp.665. ISBN: 978-603-8323-0381.

73
Shaikh, Shehnaz and Kausar Khatri
The Glorious Quran
(2020)

Review

The subtitle of this English translation of the Qur'an clearly indicates its tenor as well as its strengths and limitations: *Word-for-Word Translation to facilitate learning of Quranic Arabic.* Driven by their religious fervour, these two female scholars have brought out an interlinear, literal translation in which the English equivalent of each Qur'anic word is diligently provided. In their opinion, this will familiarize English speaking readers with Qur'anic Arabic. Notwithstanding their pious intention and laudable efforts in promoting the cause of the Qur'an, their premises are largely naïve and simplistic. It is commonplace that many Qur'anic expressions recur in the text. If one assigns the same meaning to these instances while disregarding their different contexts and circumstantial settings, one will not and cannot do justice to the meanings intended therein. On the other hand, if one employs English equivalents to different usages and nuances of the same word, it will confuse, rather confound, the readers.

More serious is the problem of producing a literal translation. Fidelity to the original is undoubtedly a pre-requisite in its translation. However, a literal translation which is devoid of any background information or explanation of personalities, places and allusions mentioned in the text, does not advance the readers' understanding. How can one grasp the meaning of *Surah al-Fil*, without having a clue about the identity of the 'Companions of the Elephant'? (p. 855). The translators faithfully translate the opening two verses of *Surah Quraysh* thus: "For the familiarity of the Quraysh. For their familiarity with the journey of winter and summer" (p. 856). Those new to the Qur'an will not likely work

out who the Quraysh are and what is meant by their winter and summer journeys.

Another problem is the unintentional replication of earlier translations. Since the theological vocabulary in English is not rich, this work betrays a marked repetition of what has already been published a long time ago. Take the following as illustrative in which the present translation re-echoes the phraseology of Abdul Majid Daryabadi's earlier translation published in 1957.

1. And the earth He has laid it for the creatures. Therein are fruit and palm trees sheathed. (Daryabadi, *al-Atiqaf* 46 : 10–11) and the earth He laid it for the creatures. Therein is fruit and date palms having sheaths (of dates) (Shaykh and Khatri, p. 748)
2. Is it you who produce the tree thereof, or are we the producer? … In the Book well-guarded. Which none can touch except the It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. (Daryabadi, *al-Waqi'ah* 56: 72 and 78–80)Is it you who produce its tree, or are we the producer … In a Book well-guarded, none touch it except the purified, (i.e. angels). A revelation from the Lord of the worlds. (Sheikh and Khatri p. 757)
3. O Believers! When it is said to you: make room in your assemblies, then make room. Allah will make room for you. And when it is said: rise up, then rise Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe and those who are endowed with knowledge. Allah is aware of whatsoever you work. (Daryabadi, *al-Mujadalah* 58:11) O you who believe! When it is said to you: "Make room" in assemblies, then make room. Allah will make room for you. And when it is said to you: "Rise up," then rise up. Allah will raise those who believe and those who were given knowledge in degrees. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. (Sheikh and Khatri, p. 767)
4. This, because they first believed, and then disbelieved, their hearts are therefore sealed, so that they do not (Daryabadi, *al-Munafiqun* 63:3) That is because they believed, then they disbelieved; so their hearts were sealed, therefore they do not

understand. (Sheikh and Khatri, p. 783) They appear to have drawn too heavily on Daryabadi. Another area which needs revisiting is the system of transliteration:

"Haraam" (p. 39) "Dawood" (p. 54) "Laam Meem" (p. 65) "Firaun" (p. 54) and "Shaitaan" (p. 767) are unacceptable phonetically. The absence of an Index, Bibliography and Glossary is another serious lacuna.

Nonetheless, a redeeming feature of the work is that, apart from its word-for-word translation, it also provides a running translation of the Qur'anic text which makes for fluent reading. However, the translation alone, bereft of any annotation will not help the readers much. I hope that this important gap will be rectified in future editions of this translation.

Details of the first edition:

Delhi, Al-Huda publications, pp. 859, Download PDF format.

74
Nadwi, Syed Salman Hussaini
The Final Revelation
(2021)

The translator's intention comes out clearly from the complete title of his work, *The Final Revelation: Interpretative Version of the Holy Quran in Modern English.* Two points stand out: i) Far from being a literal rendering, it is more of a paraphrase like exposition of the meaning and message of the Quran. ii) While bearing in mind his readers' profile and needs, he has opted for a simple, easy to understand version. Actually it is the English translation of Nadwi's original English translation of the Quran which was published in 2014.

Nadwi is a scion of the illustrious family with his such noble, towering ancestors as his grandfather, Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi and Syed Ahmad Shaheed of Rai Bareli. Although his work is bereft of explanatory notes, he has tried to compensate for his by prefacing his work with these valuable extensive pieces: i) "On the Quranic Themes" (pp.59-81), ii) "The Quran: A Self Introduction" (pp.82-127), and "Introduction to the Majestic Quran" (pp.128-130). For letting readers gain a better acquaintance with the Quranic themes Nadwi has introduced an ingenious feature in his work. He has categorized 114 Surahs under 15 chapters and identified the main contours of all these 15 chapters or sections and of each and every Surah. Take the following as illustrative. For him, Surah Al-Anfal and Al-Tawbah being thematically interlinked constitute a single chapter focusing on battles from Badr to Tabuk and bring out the "encounter between truth and falsehood and the status of unbelievers in the Islamic order."

Likewise, Surahs Yunus, Hud, Yusuf, Al-Rad, Ibraheem, Al-Hijr and Al-Nahl make up one group, for all of these contain an

"account of Messengers, their titles and biography, and signs of monotheism in the self and the universe."

Nadwi has been thus able to demonstrate cohesion and coherence in the Quranic text, though without resorting explicitly to the *nazm* principle as enunciated by Hameeduddin Farahi and his disciple, Ameen Ahsan Islahi. Nadwi's commitment to the Quran and Shariah is to the fore in his introduction. His work is marked by fervor and an earnest desire to articulate the Quranic guidance for the benefit of readers. His explanatory rendering draws them closer to the Quranic text.

Details of the first edition:

Lucknow, India, Jamia Syed Ahmad Shaheed, 2021. pp.1386.

75
Ghamidi, Javed Ahmad
The Quran
(2022)

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi (b.1953), a Pakistani writer on Islam/the Quran in Urdu, stoked controversy and sectarian divide owing to his rejection of Hadith as a source of Islam. A spate of writings have appeared in Urdu condemning him for his outrageous utterances against Shariah commands and the Prophet's authority. In so doing he twists, nay distorts the meaning of even categorical Quranic verses. Accordingly he is severely censured in the following: (a) Muhammad Qasim's *Ghamidi Nazariyat ka Tahqeeqi wa Tanqeedi Jaizah* (A Critique on Ghamidi's Views) (Sri Nagar, Imam Ibn Taiymiyyah Research and Dawah Centre, 2016) (b) Salahuddin Yusuf's *Fitna-i Ghamidiyat: Ek Tahqeeqi wa Tanqeedi Jaiza* (A Critique on Ghamidi's Mischief) (Mumbai, Dar Al-Ilm) (c) *Fitna-i Ghamidya* (The Ghamidi Meanace) by Muhammad Tufail Rizwi and (d) *Ghamidi Mazhab kya Hai* (What is the Ghamidi Sect?) by Muhammad Rafeeq.

In all fairness, however, the present English translation does not teem with abundant atrocious statements. The above mentioned writers may have scrutinized his other tendentious works.

Since there is no dearth of English translations of the Quran, including some really good, fairly recent ones, as for example, by Ahmad Zaki Hammad, Tarif Khalidi and Mustafa Khattab, there should be a very strong justification for a new one. Both the author and his disciple-cum-translator provide no convincing rationale behind this venture. The author is found making only a tall, hollow claim: "It is the first translation in history in which the coherence of the Quran becomes evident from its translation." ("Author's Foreword," p.9). Most of the existing English translations have already captured, in varying degrees, this remarkable feature of the

Quran, be it Arberry's or Abdullah Yusuf Ali's or Pickthall's rendering. Neither he nor the translator elaborates the translation strategy employed by them for achieving this feat. Moreover, let us bear it in mind that it is the English version of Ghamidi's original in Urdu. Is this distinction held by both? The translator misconstrues the feature of ellipsis in the Quran in his coarse, harsh observation which does not befit the dignity of the Quranic text: "The style of the Quran is that it states the cause of something but many a time does not use any word that signifies causation;… suppresses some of its components… and does not express them in words,… many a time nothing expect the occasion and nature of the discourse signifies this shift; it cites answers one after the other but does not cite the questions, objections and doubts it answers… while connecting verses through these linkages, it does not state them in words whether before or after." ("Translator's Foreword." p.10). It reads like an extensive chargesheet against a work which is acclaimed as a literary, rhetorical and artistic masterpiece. Khalid Yahya Blankinship has illustrated the beauty of the ellipsis in the Quran in his fascinating work *The Inimitable Quran* (Leiden, Brill, 2019,152-173). The above comments present the Quranic cohesion and coherence in a very poor light. For him, only two 20th century Quranic scholars of the Indo-Pak, Hamid al-Din Farahi (1863-1930) and Amin Ahsan Islahi (1904-1997) "introduced the world to coherence in the Quran." it is a delusional statement in the face of a very rich corpus of the *tafasir* which highlight *nazm* (coherence) in the Quran. Abd Al-Qahir Jurjani (d.471/1079) had introduced and developed the concept of *nazm* in the Quran in his *Dalail Al-Ijaz*. Ed. Mahmud Muhammad Shakir. Cairo, 1413/1992, 98-102. Worse is his objection that even "the way Islahi has translated the verses is very similar to how our exegetes have generally being [sic] doing." (p.11). Apart from being in atrocious English, the above contention is both confused and confusing. What is the "way of translation" of which of "our exegetes" with whom he is displeased? What is the alternative employed by him? There is no clue to these basic questions. Triumphantly he announces that he has "not inserted parenthesis to indicate" the

explication of "the suppressed words and sentences" in the Quranic text. (p.11). Again, it is a pernicious observation on the following two counts: i) First, the Quran dexterously employs ellipsis, as in any literary masterpiece. It does not "suppress sentences." If it does, how can the present translator or anyone other than Allah can supply it? b) It has been all Quran translators' commendable practice to place within parentheses any extra-Quranic material. This ensures the preservation of the Quranic text in its pristine purity. The translator hurls another wanton charge against the Quran: "…on most occasions it is not possible to decipher when what Muhammad is told to convey ends and the discourse from God Himself resumes." (p.12) This betrays his colossal ignorance of the stylistic features of the Quran. Even for an ordinary reader it is easy to identify the speaker from context. The absence of the title, Prophet and the honorific appellation (peace be upon him) for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the above quotation is detestable.

"The Preamble" (p.13-17) strikes one for making these two points: i) The role of a Messenger of Allah is described mainly in the prism of his "political authority… with its help he is able to destroy his rejecters and achieve victory for his followers." (pp. 13-14). In Islam, political authority is not some taboo. However perceiving it as the only mandate entrusted by Allah to all Messengers is not borne out by the Quran. ii) The work is marred by an innovation. 114 Quranic Surahs have been classified under seven chapters. These seven divisions do not correspond with the conventional division of the Quranic text into seven *manazil* (sections) which facilitates the recitation of the whole Quran in a week. The proposed chapter-wise division is with reference to themes arbitrarily assigned by Ghamidi. It is hard to endorse his proposition that Chapter 1 comprising Surahs 1-5 consists of a single theme, and chapter 2 (Surahs 6-9) another one theme. Audaciously enough, Ghamidi designates his classification of 7 chapters as illustrative of *sabá min al-mathani* (Al-Hijr 15:87). Quran scholars down the ages have taken the above to mean the

seven oft-repeated verses of Surah Al-Fatihah, of which the recitation is mandatory in every *raká* (cycle) of prayer.

Only a few brief annotations appear in the work. Some of these betray whimsical, objectionable views (*tafsir bi al-ray madhmum*).

1) Verse 282 of Al-Baqarah prescribes the requisite of two women as a witness in a business transaction. Ghamidi obdurately declares: "This directive is of a precautionary nature. Thus if it is no longer needed as a result of women undergoing a change in their circumstances, then following it will also be not necessary." (p.84)

2) He plays down the miracle of the she-camel granted to Prophet Salih (Al-Araf 7:73; Hud 11:64 and Al-Shuara 26:155) (p.225)

3) His obsession with the political facet of the Messengers comes out thus: "They and their companions necessarily become dominant in this world also." (Yunus 10:64, p.295) He reiterates the same point in his elucidation of Verse 30 of Al-Nahl (p.364)

4) For Ghamidi, not only *isra* (Prophet Muhammad's) Night Journey and Ascent as referred to in verse 1 of Al-Isra (p.386), even Prophet Musa's interaction with a special servant of Allah, popularly known as Khizr in Surah Al-Kahf, are only "dreams" (p.403). This represents the height of pseudo-rationalism which blinds one to any miracle.

5) Ghamidi identifies the forbidden tree in the Quran with "the tree of procreation," though without citing any evidence. His following annotation, which is supposed to define and explain things Quranic is too convoluted to make any sense: "This [Verse 120 of Ta Ha] refers to the tree of procreation eating the fruit of which sustains mankind in this world." (p.430). It is an article of faith that Allah the Nourisher sustains every living being.

6) Without any scruples for *usul al-tafsir* and consensus of Muslims over the centuries, Ghamidi draws a line of

demarcation between the universal and specific directives of the Quran. For him, the Quranic moral precepts outlined in Verses 32-35 of Al-Ahzab "do not relate to common women." (p.570). Once again, he impudently asserts this without substantiating his contention with reference to any *tafsir* report.

7) Going a step further, he dismisses *hijab* as "a temporary measure." For him, "It is evident from these words and their context also [Verse 59 of Al-Ahzab] that they do not contain any directive related to *hijab*." (p.575)

8) Verse 34 of Saad states: "Allah tested Sulaiman. We placed on his throne a mere body (without life)." Ghamidi offers this garbled interpretation: "Solomon (sws) was made so helpless and sorrowful that it seemed that only a soulless body was lying on his throne." (p.621)

9) He misconstrues the import of Verse 4 of Muhammad and makes an exaggerated claim which is not borne out by Muslim history: "It is this directive of the Quran which has forever ended the tradition of enslaving prisoners of war and in this way uprooted the institution of slavery." (p.697).

A weird aspect of this work is its relation with Ghamidi's original translation and tafsir in Urdu, *Al-Bayan* (2010), running into 5 hefty volumes. Volume 1 of *Al-Bayan* which is up to only Surah Al-Maida consists of 700 pages while this complete English work is only 900 pages. The original Urdu has thousands of extensive annotations whereas the English version under review has very brief 100+ notes.

The "Author's Foreword" and "Preamble" and the translated Quranic text are identical in both Urdu and English editions. In his "Translator's Foreword," Shahzad Saleem does not say a word about the mysterious "suppression" of thousands of Ghamidi's annotations in the Urdu original. Why were these dropped? Were these considered unsuitable for English speaking readers? Were these too controversial or sacrilegious? This unscrupulousness in translating an Urdu work into English is grotesque.

Appended to the work are a short Glossary and a fairly extensive Index. The absence of any entry on God/Allah in Index strikes a jarring note, though several divine attributes have been covered well. In view of the intrusion of some bizarre views on things Qurnaic and the unremarkable quality of the English rendering, this work does not constitute a valuable addition to Quranic scholarship.

Details of the first edition:

English Translation of the Urdu original by Shahzad Saleem, Mumbai, Al-Mawrid, 2022, pp. 915, ISBN: 9989696810322

76
Kiani, Tahir Mahmood
The Easy Quran
(2022)

Of late, the appearance of reader-friendly versions rendered in easy to understand English is a desirable development in the field of English translations of the Qur'ān. The subtitle of the translation under review is illustrative of the same welcome trend: "A Translation in Simple English." These versions are in sharp contrast to the earlier ones by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930), Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934-1937) and ʿAbdul Mājid Daryābādī (1957) cast in the archaic mould of the King James Bible, with such incomprehensible pronouns as thou/thine/thy, as well as numerous other obsolete expressions.

The Easy Quran opens with only a single page introduction which is, of course, insufficient for English-speaking readers who are new to the Qur'ān. To project a Sūrah as a chapter and the Qur'ān as a book is an oversimplification which might confound the readers who are not familiar with the oral, gradual revelation of the Qur'ān spanning over 23 years, compiled later under Allah's instruction. Strictly speaking, the terms chapter and book are misnomers when applied to any Sūrah and the Qur'ān itself. In his brilliant introduction, Sayyid Mawdūdī in his Towards Understanding the Qur'ān has explained how to study the Qur'ān fruitfully, without taking the Qur'ān as a book in its terminological sense.

The translation is bereft of any explanatory notes, which is a serious shortcoming, as this work is addressed in the main to the uninitiated readers. The latter cannot derive much benefit from a mere bare translation. Numerous Qur'ānic terms and allusions stand in need of elucidation for a rewarding, satisfying study of the Qur'ān. Kiani has inserted only some additional words for facilitating a better understanding of the verses. He has done well to place this

additional, extraQur'ānic material distinctly separate from the original text itself. By doing so, he has managed to deal well with ellipsis in the Qur'ānic text and supplied useful information which contributes to a fluent reading of his translated version.

The work is presented as a translation in simple English and, to a large extent, it is. However, the work is marred by the inclusion of some awkward, unidiomatic expressions which do not befit elegant English syntax, such as, for example, his translation of the bismillah as: "Allah's name I begin with" (p.1). The work is littered with contractions such as "we've, won't, aren't isn't, don't etc.," which is unacceptable in formal, academic English writing. Notwithstanding Kiani's intent to present a reader-friendly rendering, his translation of Al-Baqarah 2: 76 and al-Aḥzāb 33: 56 runs into 40 and 56 words respectively. Such unusually long sentences are not likely going to be grasped by a great number of readers.

Some of Kiani's renderings appear to be discordant with idiomatic English. Here are some examples: (i) "They are choosing to be deaf ..." (p.20); (ii) "What confidence they have for the Fire!" (p. 20); (iii) "These showoffs won't be able to do anything" (p. 34); (iv) "Yet here you are arguing..." (p. 74); (v) "They were followed around by a curse" (p. 183); (vi) "... those who look after their prayers" (p. 278); (vii) "... who was the furthest from the right way" (p. 296); and (viii) "If We had wanted, We could send down to them a sign from the sky, to which their necks would stay bowed in humility" (p. 299).

Besides these stylistic blemishes, Kiani has misconstrued the import of verses 1213 of Sūrah al-Najm by translating it as: "Are you arguing with him about what he saw? He certainly saw Allah when he came down the second time." The consensus view, however, is that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) had seen the Archangel, Jibrīl, not Allah. (See Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 548; Sayyid Mawdūdī p. 1093 and Muhammad Ahmad Juna Garhi, p.1492).

Notwithstanding Kiani's sincerity of purpose, his translation is a slight work, for it does not contribute to a rewarding study of the meaning and message of the Qur'ān nor does it have reader-friendly features to recommend itself as a helpful English version of the import of the Qur'ān.

Details of the first edition:

London, Taha Publishers, 20222, pp. 554, ISBN: 978-1915357007.

77
Khan, Zafarul Islam
The Glorious Quran an English Translation With Annotations
(2023)

With around 150 complete English translations of the Qur'ān, mostly carried out in the 21st century (both in print and e-forms), a new one can only justifiably carve out its place if it stands out for certain distinctive features in both conception and execution and, most importantly, in its presentation skills and user-friendly devices. On the reason behind embarking on this venture, Zafarul Islam Khan (b. 1948), an activist in the affairs of post-Independent Indian

Muslims, states: "The translation started over a decade ago as a revision of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English translation (1934-1937)." However, "this translation is hardly a revision… it may be treated as a new work" (pp. 15 and 16). Khan's affirmation is perfectly justified. It is not vitiated by any of the serious flaws in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation: his Ismāʿīlī mind-set which is at work in the interpretation of several Qur'ānic verses, his unpardonable dismissal of the Qur'ānic account of all matters pertaining to the Unseen (al-ghayb), and his treatment of miracles as allegories and figurative expressions as well as in his irksome use of archaic English expressions and syntax.

Another strand of Khan's approach, in his own words, has been "to avoid academic or comparative comments" (p. 17). That his work is not academic is his understatement steeped in humility and modesty. His is a well-documented, properly cited work, meeting the requisite of academic standard. His critique on the Bible underscores his sterling scholarship. As to his avoidance of "comparative" comments, at places, one wishes he should have, at least, pointed to the stance of some deviant sects, and particularly

the Qadyanis. His silence regarding some sensitive issues has deprived the readers of Qur'ānic guidance. His stance of hyper objectivity in certain instances has resulted in doing somewhat a disservice to the readers, a point which would be illustrated below. In his explication of things Qur'ānic, he has largely drawn on the views "of the earliest scholars of Islam" (p.17). Occasionally, however, he touches on today's problems and challenges, though regrettably without providing Qur'ānic ways out. In a few instances, illustrated below, he expresses his personal views which is problematic.

"The Translator's Note" (pp.13-20), lucidly describing the intent, is followed by "An Introduction to the Quran" (pp.21-44) which mostly states commonplaces, with the following two exceptional sections: (i) "Scientific Indications of the Quran" (pp. 31-33), listing 20 scientific facts which he identifies in the Qur'ānic text. He does so notwithstanding his realization that "the Quran is a book of divine guidance" and his own admission that "these [scientific facts] were not known to the people of Arabia or mankind in general at the time of the revelation" (p.311). Given this, what was the purpose of these pieces of revelation for the last 1400 years? It is common knowledge that scientific "facts" born of a godless milieu are not sacrosanct and liable to change. Notwithstanding its allurement and mass appeal, this approach should better be avoided in order to maintain the pristine purity of the Qur'ānic text. The Qur'ān is not, and never claims to be, a book of science. How could the universally accepted scientific theory of evolution be possibly reconciled with the Qur'ānic account of creation? How can the current perfectly legalized and acceptable notions of sexual orientations (LGBTQ) be accommodated within the Qur'ānic code on sexuality?

In sharp contrast to the above whimsical section, the other and amazingly extensive one on "Differences between the Biblical and Quranic Narratives" (pp. 33-41) is entrenched in solid, incontrovertible scholarship. In laying bare numerous instances of debauchery, not sparing even the prophets of God, parochialism

and superstition, Khan brings home the moral excellence and universality of the Qur'ān, vindicating its unmistakable divine origin. More importantly, it refutes the baseless Orientalist charge, levelled down the ages, that the Qur'ān is a poor replica of the Bible, for it establishes the originality of the Qur'ānic text. In his English translation and commentary (1957), Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1892-1977), the Indian Muslim scholar, was the first to shed light on comparative religion, illustrating how the Qur'ān stands out above the Bible. Khan has enriched remarkably this aspect of Qur'ānic study. Some inaccuracies mar the brief section on "Translations of the Qur'ān" (p. 42): Robert of Ketton's Latin translation was carried out in 1143, not 1542-43. More than 150, not "50" (p.42) complete translations of the Qur'ān exist now in English. There are hundreds of translations in Urdu and English, not "dozens" (p. 42).

Khan's translation is accurate, conveying effectively the sense of the original. He deserves credit for having opted for simple, easy-to-understand English, free from jargon or any embellishment. His frequent use of parenthetical explanatory statements in dealing with ellipsis and pronominal interplay goes a long way in facilitating a better understanding of the Qur'ān.

Khan's is a profusely annotated translation. Mostly, his notes re-state the sound interpretations of the classical exegetes of the Qur'ān. At places, however, he has attempted at enriching this classical tradition by addressing certain issues in a fresh perspective in view of the new ground realities of our time. For example, with reference to the recent wanton abuse of the term jihad by some mindless Muslims and the resultant Islamophobia across the world, he has presented a careful, balanced definition of jihad: "Private persons and non-state actions are not allowed to declare jihad" (p. 1041) as jihad, according to Khan, is essentially for self-defence (p. 294).

Righty, he denounces the loathsome practice, followed by some Muslims, of fake marriage (ḥalalah) for facilitating re-marriage of divorced couples.

Notwithstanding his concern for gender parity, he is not swayed by the fallacious notion of "lifelong maintenance for divorced woman" by the husband (p. 100). However, there is a pressing need for sensitizing the Muslim community about shunning the practice of divorce which stigmatizes women, shatters the institution of family and traumatises children.

While introducing Prophets Dāwūd and Sulaymān (peace be upon them), Khan points to their vilification in the Bible (pp. 103 and 105). He provides a nuanced perception of present-day geo-political reality upon discussing the hijrah (migration in Allah's cause): "Today, after the emergence of nation-states and rigid national boundaries, this option is no longer feasible" (p. 175). The truth of the Qur'ānic assertion about the Pharaoh Ramses II, of Prophet Mūsā's day: "This day shall we save you in your body, that you may be a sign to those who come after you" (Yūnus 10:92) is highlighted with reference to the presence of his mummified body at the Cairo museum, Egypt (p. 339). Discerningly, he translates juyub (al-Nūr 24:31) as the neck opening in the context of the dress code of women (p. 534).

A valuable component of Khan's interpretation of the Qur'ān is his sane and pragmatic advice to the Muslims living as minorities all over the world. Khan draws attention to the precedent set by Prophet Yūsuf (peace be upon him) who served under an unbelieving king "for the common good of society" (pp. 232 and 371) and the example of Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) who remained in non-Muslim dominated Makkah for 13 years (p. 1048). The translator is unequivocal in his rejection of equating Islam with terrorism (p.1068). His engagement with the issue of gender parity, a burning question of our time, is insightful and instructive. He cites Qur'ānic verses (pp. 1111 and 1116) which establish the equality of men and women (al-Nisā' 4: 32) and Allah's equal reward for both men and women (al-Nisā' 4: 124 and Ghāfir 40: 40). In a similar vein, he emphasises the egalitarian teaching of the Qur'ān (al-Ḥujurāt 49: 13) which rules out racism

(p. 1190) and also quotes a cluster of Qur'ānic verses which press home the guarantee of freedom of religion in Islam (p.1196).

In the light of the above discussion Khan emerges as a Muslim scholar who is well grounded in the rich Tafsīr tradition and who is alive to contemporary challenges which he earnestly seeks to resolve, without resorting to unbridled liberalism or undermining the traditional understanding of the Qur'ān. His tafsīr notes are, on the whole, consonant with the stance of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamāʿah. However, his version is questionable in the following instances, owing to his inadvertent lapses, recklessness or overdrive, and some remedial modifications in the next edition would render it as a truly representative English translation which could be recommended unhesitatingly to both Muslim and non-Muslim readers:

1) Since the Qur'ān unambiguously brands Satan as belonging to the jinn in alKahf 18:50, Khan's following loose statement is bewildering: "Shaytan (Satan) may be a Jinn, human or animal who rebels or is steeped in evil" (p. 47).

2) Despite the explicit description of Prophet Sulaymān (peace be upon him) in both the Bible and the Qur'ān as a messenger of God, Khan's following superfluous comment is likely only to confound the readers: "There is no mention of Sulayman and his kingdom in contemporary Egyptian records and inscriptions." Any statement, irrespective of its source, is not worth-quoting in Tafsīr if it contests the veracity of the Qur'ān.

3) A recurrent irksome, nay problematic, aspect of Khan's interpretation is that while he has faithfully defined several legal rulings, he makes it a point to emphasise that these are redundant and no longer practised. This may leave the readers with the impression that these legal rulings are impractical and not valid for all times and places.

Khan's identification of Prophet Dhū'l-Kifl (peace be upon him) with Buddha is, at best, a mere speculation (p. 499). For, there is little on record in Islamic sources about Prophet Dhū'l-Kifl (peace

be upon him) whereas Buddha's life and career are meticulously documented. It is therefore quite a task to suggest that they are the same person. Khan is not much off the mark in lamenting over the lack of knowledge among Muslims today. However, the way out he proposes is that "they should read the translations of the Quran" (p. 546), has its own serious perils.

It is most unfortunate that Khan's notes on Prophets Dāwūd and Sulaymān (peace be upon them) amount to their denigration. He appears to have been swayed by baseless Jewish reports (Isrā'īlīyāt) in passing insinuations about Prophet Dāwūd's desire to marry the wife of one of his subjects and mentioning Prophet Sulaymān's alleged lapses. Worse, he audaciously makes these remarks, in explaining verses 21 and 33 of Sūrah Ṣād, which do not at all indict these outstanding messengers of Allah. He erroneously speaks of the 4th century hijrī scholar al-Māwardī as "a modern scholar" who advocates elections! (p.1023). His contention that the Hindus belong to Ahl al-Kitāb (People of the Book) is contestable (p.1023). His other assertion about Sayyid Ismāʿīl Shahīd (d. 1831) and Sayyid Aḥmad Barelvī (d. 1831) as the founding father of Ahl al-Ḥadīth in India (p.1023) is open to question. In his authoritative biography, Sīrat Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, Sayyid Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Nadwī does not refer to this facet of the Shahīd's many accomplishments. In describing the beliefs of the Shīʿahs such as the Imāmah (p. 1037), mutʿah (p.1051) Shīʿah sects (p. 1061) and taqiyyah (p.1067), Khan has merely recounted their doctrines but fails to identify their errors and deviation from mainstream orthodox beliefs. The same is true for his questionable silence over the Qadyanis in his account of Khatm al-Anbiyā' (p.1044) (Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) being the last, final Prophet).

In the face of the Islamic doctrine of the infallibility (ʿiṣmah) of the prophets, Khan's insistence on their having committed sins is outrageous (p.771). Occasionally, some prophets did indulge in some inadvertent lapses and were immediately pardoned by Allah as they expressed repentance and all this is duly recorded in the

Qur'ān. The bare factual description of the Ḥudaybiyyah peace treaty (p.776) should have also drawn attention to the seemingly unfavourable provisions of the treaty which ultimately resulted in the Muslims' triumph.

These observations apart, which need revision in the next edition of this valuable work, the sweep of Khan's scholarship is astonishingly rich and deep. The appendixes on Islamic Terms and Subject Index to the Qur'ān list all that there is to know about the contents of the Qur'ān. His reader-friendly presentation skills have enhanced the usefulness of the work. As already stated, the level of the English translation is fairly good. A slight revision would render Khan's work as truly representative of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamāʿah's understanding of the Qur'ān in English which is needed much by millions of English-speaking Muslims.

Details of the first edition:

New Delhi, Institute of Islamic and Arab Studies, 2023, pp. 1234, ISBN: 978-8172211349.

78
Habib, M.A.R. and Lawrence, Bruce H.
The Quran: A Verse Translation
(2024)

Of more than 150 complete English translations of the Quran, only a very few are in Free and Blank verse. The translation under study is a substantial addition to the sub-genre of the "Verse Translation" of the Quran in English. It represents the fruit of a decade-long collaborative project by M.A.R. Habib, a poet who is well-versed in literature and Bruce B. Lawrence, the Nancy and Marcus Humanities Professor Emeritus of Religion at Duke University, USA. Lawrence is widely acclaimed for his valuable writings on Islam and for his advocacy for cordial Inter Faith relations between Christians and Muslims, even in the turbulent post 9/11 world. His highly informative and empathetic work, *The Koran in English: A Biography*, Princeton University Press, 2014, (reviewed by me in the *Muslim World Book Review*, 39:4, Summer 2019, pp. 14-18) stands out as a testament to his nuanced admiration for Islam/the Quran and his discerning eye for the sordid "Politics of English Translations of the Quran" He is one of the very few worthy Western scholars, like Annemarie Schimmel, Karen Armstrong, John L. Esposito, Frederick Quinn and Craig Considine in our times, who deserve credit for, at least, granting space in their works to the Islamic beliefs and practices, without distorting or discrediting these, as is the wont of the overwhelming number of Western writers on Islam. As in his earlier studies, in this work too, he depicts Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the "walking Quran," pointing as it does to his fair, judicious evaluation of the edifying teachings of both the Quran and *Sirah*. Contained in "Introduction" (pp.xi-xxii) is his reverent profile of *Sirah*, culled diligently from i) the Quran, ii) authentic Hadith and iii) reliable works on *Sirah*. Little wonder then that his account is singularly free from the errors of perspective spawned by the vast majority of ill-informed and biased Western writers. Equally gratifying in his description of the Quran according to the Islamic

creed, without any insinuation of its Judaeo-Biblical origin or its commands for killing every non-Muslim or it being a dated, incoherent work having no place in our time.

Habib and Lawrence have provided an extensive justification for having embarked upon their "Verse translation" (pp.xxiii-xLvii). Its rationale stems from their belief that "the Quranic text itself is deeply poetic. The numerous stylistic virtues of the Quran include its use of rhymed and rhythmical prose (*Saj*), allusions, symbolism, metaphors, similes and parables." (p. xxxiv) For them, many hallmarks of the original are lost in a prose rendering of the Quran. In order to substantiate this stance, they cite their verse translation of this verse:

> Glory be to the One
> who took His servant
> on a journey by night
> from the sacred mosque
> to the farthest mosque,
> whose percincts We blessed
> that We might show him
> some of Our signs. He alone
> is the All Hearing
> All Seeing (Al-Isra 17:1)

They adduce also the conception and execution of versification, rhymed prose, and accentual verse in the Quranic text which, in their opinion, can be captured to some degree, only in a verse translation. Their contention for having inserted "Parenthetical additions to the Quranic text" (pp. Lix-Lxii) is in consonance with the art of craft of translation.

Prefaced to each Surah is a very brief introduction on the period of its revelation and its major themes. This reader friendly feature helps readers grasp better the meaning and message of the Quran. Since both the translators are well versed in the Quranic text, and Arabic and English idiom and usage, the level of translation is fairly good. It was, nonetheless, astonishing to note the translators' preference for third person plural pronouns (Al-Adiyat 100:6-9, p.519 and Al-Qari'a 101:6-10, pp.519-520) whereas the Quranic text employs third person singular pronouns in these instances.

The translators affirm the preservation of the Quranic text in its pristine purity since the day of its revelations, as is borne out by the 7th century inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem (p.xxviii) Judiciously enough, they identify the following "central themes of the Quran: unity of God, who has no partners; obligation of human beings to worship God, not only through prayer but by practicing justice, honesty and charity" (p.xxix).

The translators' copious end Notes (pp.541-600) help readers fathom better the import of several Quranic concepts, terms, allusions and events. These notes, though very brief, are illustrative of the authors' sound, nuanced understanding of things Quranic. Another valuable strand of these notes is cross referencing, bringing to readers' attention Quranic verses of an identical import on an issue. The introduction to Surah Al-Fatiha (p.3) points to some of its merits. However, it reminds one of Lawrence's earlier brilliant comment on this Surah in his *The Koran in English*: "It offers the gist, the fine gold dust of All Revelations." (p.145).

As already acknowledged, it is edifying that Notes explicate an array of Quranic references and allusions. Here is the annotation for the translators' preference for rendering *'alamin* (Al-Fatihah 1:2) as "universe": "The word "universe" is used here instead of "worlds" in order to convey the fact that God's creation, while composed of many worlds, and many levels of beings is ultimately a unity." (p.541) Insightfully enough, the originality of the Quran is stressed in reporting that unlike the Quran, the Jewish tradition depicts the archangel Jibrail in a negative light (p.543). According to the authors, the Quran commends "fighting, but solely in self defense and within limits." (p.545). For them, the Quran is permeated with gender parity as they aver: "…these verses [2:222, 228, 242 and 4:34] curtailed rather than expanded both male dominance and the unbridled resort to patriarchal norms." (p.546) Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) professed and practised peaceful co-existence with Christians, as they explicate Verse 61 of Ali Imran: "a treaty was issued giving these Christians protection to practice their religion in territory controlled by the ascendant Muslims." (p.548). The much maligned Verse 34 of Al-Nisa is

explained in terms of "harmless force," to be used against a disobedient, rebellious wife followed by this assertion: "Numerous sayings of the Prophet condemn the practice of beating women; Muhammad never even raised his voice to any of his wives." (p.549). A slight inaccuracy mars their observation that Verse 39 of Ibraheem "is the sole verse where Isaac and Ishmael are mentioned together." (p.559). Their names appear side by side also in Verses 133,136 and 140 of Al-Baqarah and 163 of Al-Nisa. "The seven much recited verses," referred to in Al-Hijr 15:87, are correctly identified by them as "the seven verses of Surah Al-Fatiha." (p.560). The authors do well to alert readers that the Quranic appellation *ruh al-quds* is specific to the archangel Gabriel; "not to be confused with "the Holy Spirit," a central component of the Christian doctrine of Trinity." (pp.532 and 561) However, the authors are somewhat off balance in harping too much on the "mysterious episodes" and mystics' identification of "spiritual depth" in Surah Al-Kahaf. (p.564) The distinction between a *nabi* (Prophet) and *rasul* (Messenger) has been neatly explained (p.566). So is the elucidation of the incident of *ifk* (slander) directed against the Prophet's wife, Aishah (RA). (p.570) The authors have lowered their guard in alluding to an outrageous Biblical story about Prophet David (peace be upon him) in explicating Verse 21 of Saad. (p.580) Their definitions of the resolute Messengers (Al-Ahqaf 46:35, p.585) and the tree of Zaqqum (Al-Waqi'ah 56:52) is cognate with the Islamic belief system.

The entries in Glossary (pp.529-533) are, on the whole, accurate and reader friendly. Nonetheless Satan/Iblis should have been mentioned under the head "Jinn." (p.531) The List of the Beautiful Names of "Allah" (pp.535-539) is both comprehensive and illuminating. It is, however, bewildering that this valuable work, which would be read with much profit in decades to come, is bereft of the Quranic/Arabic text and Index. These should be inserted in the next edition.

Details of the first edition:

New York, Liverright, W.W. Norton, 2024. pp. 600. ISBN: 978-0-87140-449-2

PART II
BY SHIA MUSLIMS

79
Chinoy, Ali Muhammad Fazil
The Glorious Quran, Translated with Commentary of Divine Lights
(1954)

Since the key term in its subtitle, "Divine Lights" stands for Ahl Al-Bayt (Prophet Muhammad's family in the Shia parlance) (p.8), it is a patently sectarian, Shiah interpretation of the Quran. Throughout an audacious attempt has been made to sanctify the beliefs peculiar to Shiah with reference to Quranic verses which are not even remotely linked with the notions hoisted upon these. Chinoy minces no words in declaring the Shiah design of his work as he states: "In attempting to translate and compile a brief Shia commentary in English, so far none done, reference has been made to the Urdu commentary *viz*. "Umdatul Bayan" and "Translation of the Glorious Quran" by the late Syed Maqbool Ahmad of Delhi who has restricted its exposition to Divine Lights (The Immaculate Ahl Al-Bayt,) "heavenly born, inspired by Divinity, to exemplify in persons Divine Philosophy of the Text" (p.8). For him "Ali is a hero of the [Quranic] Text" with whom and "other remaining members of the Ahl Al-Bayt," the tenants of "Shia sect are inseparably connected" (p.8). It is therefore no surprise that the whole commentary on the Quran is patently in Shiah terms of reference take and in virulent language. His following annotations serve as instances in point:

i. When the Prophet was informed they omitted in disclosing Ali's succession as declared by him at the valley of Khum at the Kaba, along with other declarations, he repeated the verse: "Some of them are so illiterate they do not understand the text (except tidings or threats) held out therein, they are none but simply guessing (as simple Shia's faith on Hussain) without his Marefah who sacrificed self and family to gain Divine will." (Al-Baqarah 2:78, p.22).

ii. The denial of "Imammate" is a major sin which would land one into Eternal Hell. (p.22).

iii. "The prophet predicted Hussain's slaughter with three days' hunger, thirst by so called Muslims, who will be condemned to Hell." (p.23).

iv. "The followers of Satan… in Muslims disliked to follow Divine Nominees by Prophet" (p.25).

v. "Nothing is so frequently repeated in the Quran-i-Sharif as "Those who believe in God, Prophet and Ahl Al-Bayt." Conversely, those who discard Ahl Al-Bayt are people of Hell" (p.26).

vi. "When God has indicated His chosen guides as Divine Lights [Ahl Al-Bayt], sent them with miracles to justify their genuine case." (p.45).

vii. "Shias, unlike Sunnis, only recognize talak-i-Sunnat,… against—heretical divorce, introduced in the second century of the Muslim era during Umeya Monarchy" (p.49).

viii. "A singular case during the Prophet's regime [sic] was to be fouond [sic] in Ali in whose favour, he repeated [the above verses 245-248 of Al-Baqarah]." (p.53).

ix. "Here a distinct proof, of Prophet's followers,… could not save the selves [sic] from inborn hatred they bore especially to Ali with whom they could not compete on any count… they were not sincere adherents of the Prophet. They had interest of the world" (pp.54-55).

x. "Muslims… after having admitted leadership of non-authorized Khilafat, lost all rights to Paradise and shall ever be in Hell." (p.56).

xi. During *miraj* (the Night Journey), the "succession of Ali and Immaculates (Divine Lights i.e. Ahl Al-Bayt) was ratified. God shall never admit him in paradise in whose heart there is a feelings of love for the first two successors of the Prophet" (pp.62-63)

xii. “These are Imam’s houses burning them is most tyrannical. Call to mind Omar to burn Fatima’s house.” (p.63).

xiii. “Ali, the legal Successor of the Prophet was most unjustly treated by the Prophet’s followers.” (p.65).

xiv. Verse 107 of Surah Al-Saffat “presages Imam Hussain’s martyrdom and is a miracle of the Glorious Quran.” (vol.6, p.15).

In line with the same vitriolic sectarian bigotry are the following authorial comments: Vol.2, p.6; Vol.4, p.121; vol.5, p.120 and Vol.6, p.187.

True to its unmistakable sectarian Shiah purport, the work carries the following Appendixes, of which the titles underscore their sole mission of propagating Shiah belief system:

- Appendix 1: Doctrine of Shiah Faith (1,129-130).
- Appendix 2: Prophet’s Sermon near the valley of Khum (2, 126-135).
- Appendix 3: Divine Text and Divine Lights (Ahl Al-Bayt) (3, 99-103).
- Appendix 4: Extracts from Usual Al-Kafi from Wafi, to Digest Doctrines of Shia Faith (4, 121-123).
- Appendix 5: Advice of Imam Ali to Imam Hasan (5, 120-123)
- Appendix 6: Abstract of Prayers of Four Divine Lights (Ahl Al-Bayt) to Grant Amiable Character (6, 112-113)
- Appendix 7: Ali’s Confidential Intercourse of Sentiments (7, 187-189)

Without any regard for academic standards, Chinoy declares that in his work: “The composing errors are not corrected.” (p.3). As a result, the work is inundated with howlers of all sorts: unpardonable grammatical errors, faulty syntax and numerous spelling mistakes. Often does it become impossible to figure out what Chinoy intends to convey. Readers can only hazard some guess at their own risk.

Here are some instances in point: "…prayers of Menand Spirits until the Day of Judgement and Ali is the gate of Knowledge." (1, 53); "inviting them to Sirate Mustakim" (1,64); "…why all acts Ali were under self-denial." (1, 65) If it is spend under consideration… thus sum total remaining the same as "Law-he-Mahfue" varying as per varying tendency as per "Law-he-Mahv. If out of it, goes to virtue, goes to extend life." (5, 124) and "Hadebiya,… fathful,… swave,… and handed keeys" (7, 182).

It is an unreadable work both for its numerous typographical errors and for its deplorable polemical contents directed against the mainstream Sunni Muslims.

How edifying it is to note the rebuttal of Chinoy's obnoxious sectarianism and anti-Sunni/Sahabah triade by the outstanding Lebanese Shiah scholar, Ayatullah Syed Ali Ameen Amili in his Arabic book, *Al-Shia wa Al-Sunnah.* (p.99)

Details of the first edition:

11-8-437 Red Hills, Hyderabad Deccan, India, 1954. Reissued by www.alhassanain.org.

A set of 7 volumes. Pp. Vol. 1:132, Vol. 2:136, Vol. 3:113, Vol. 4:124, Vol. 5:124, Vol. 6:114 and Vol. 7:189.

80
Ali, S.V. Mir Ahmad
The Holy Qur'an with English Translation of the Arabic Text and Commentary according to the Version of the Holy Ahlul-Bait
(1964)

Sajjadi Vafakhani Mir Ahmad Ali (d. 1977) stands out as the first Shia translator of the whole Qur'an. Appended to his translation are the explanatory notes from another Shia scholar, Ayatullah Agha Mahdi Pooya Yazdi.

The two editions of the Qur'an translation by S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali and Mirza Mahdi Puya, for convenience's sake are referred to in this review at the 'New York' and 'Karachi' editions respectively. The New York edition is essentially a reprint of the work that first appeared in 1964, published from Karachi, though probably with an eye on the American market, it is now paraded as the 'first US Edition.' The American publisher's aptly-titled 'Apology' merely expresses their pious intention: 'Correcting errors will have topmost priority for us.' (p. 6b) It does not contain any clue as to whether they have in fact rectified any errors. Amid this uncertainly, one thing stands out - that it is a blatantly, sectarian work with obvious polemical designs. To be precise, it is representative of the Shia viewpoint on the history of interpretation of the Qur'an. To the translator's credit he makes no bones about his intention in that the very subtitle of the work is 'the Version of the Holy Ahlul-Bait.' The translator holds 'a considerable number of both Muslim and non-Muslim brethren' guilty of having misinterpreted 'the actual significance of the most important historic event of *Ghadeer-e-Khum*, 'denial of the appointment of the successor to him which the Holy Prophet during his lifetime had done' and 'presenting the illegal and unwarranted acts of some political leaders after the departure of the Holy Prophet, as legal

and warranted, as the heroic deeds for the faith' (p. 23a). In the same sectarian vein, Mirza Pooya writes in the Introduction: 'Ali is the Foremost and Topmost One next only to the Holy Prophet in the thorough knowledge of the inner and outer significance of every word, sentence, passage, part or chapter of the Qur'an in its revealed and pre-revealed form to which the Qur'an itself bears testimony ...' (p. 43a). Throughout the work, Shiism is presented as 'Islam-Original' (p. 67a) and distinct Shia practices such as 'Mourning for the Martyrs' (p. 136a), *Muta'* (pp. 139a- 140a) and *tabarra* (p. 126a) are vindicated. For example, we are told: "There are authentic traditions of the Holy Prophet shedding tears for the prophecied massacre of Husain even before the event had actually taken place" (p. 136a); *Muta'* or the Timed-Wedlock is valid by the Qur'an (p. 139a), and that there are specific 'references to Ali Ibn Abi Taleb in the Holy Qur'an' (p. 146a).

Neal Robinson identifies another four instances of Shia sectarian bias in S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali's translation - in (a) Verses 124 of Al-Baqarah, (b) 33 of al-Ahzab (c) 23 of al-Shura and (d) 55 of al-Maidah, in which he seeks to establish these peculiar Shia beliefs: (a) Ali enjoyed the same Imamate which was conferred on Prophet Abraham; (b) the Prophet's close relatives namely, Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn were "kept free of sin from the moment of their birth,"; (c) affection for the above family members of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is obligatory and (d) *Imam* as the spiritual guardian of believers.[8]

The quality of translation is fairly good, though it is very similar, in places, to Pickthall's earlier English translation (1930). The following illustration may help bring out the extent of Ali's reliance of Pickthall's work:

> Alif, Lam, Mim (A.L.M.). the Romans have been defeated, in a nearer land, but they after being defeated will soon be victorious within a few years; God's is the authority before and after; and on that day the believers shall rejoice, with the aid of God; aideth

[8] Neal Robinson, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Qur'an," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8:3 (1997), 261-263.

> He whomsoever He willeth; and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Merciful. (This is) the promise of God! Faileth not God His promise, but most know not (this). They know (only) the appearance of the life of this world, while of the Hereafter they are heedless. (S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali's translation, al-Rum 30:1-7, pp. 1206-7).
>
> Alif-Lam-Mim. The Romans have been defeated tin the nearer land, and they, after their defeat will be victorious within ten years – Allah's is the command in the former case and in the latter and on that day the believers will rejoice in Allah's help to victory. He helpeth to victory whom He will. He is the Mighty, the Merciful. It is a promise of Allah. Allah faileth not His promise, but most of mankind know not. They know only some appearance of the life of the world and are heedless of the Hereafter. (Pickthall's translation, al-Rum 30: 1-7).

The Karachi edition has many curious features. First, the spelling difference In the name of one of the two translators, from 'Agha Haji Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdi' (American edition), to 'Aqa Mirza Mahdi Puya' in the Karachi edition. It is just not possible that they are two different persons, but this discrepancy in spelling poses many difficulties for bibliographic purposes. This edition is basically a rehashing or adaptation of the earlier 1964 edition. The translation of the Quranic text nd notes has been considerably changed in places. More importantly, the sectarian colour vitiating the American edition is not so obvious in this edition. This is indeed a welcome change, for a translation of the Qur'an should serve the sole purpose of disseminating its meaning and message to non-Arabic speaking readers; it must not be tethered to polemical concerns.

Publication details of the first edition:
Karachi, Pakistan, M. Khaleel Shirazi, 1964. 1084 pages.

Number of Editions: 10

81
Shakir, M.H.
The Quran
(1968)

Although M. H. Shakir's translation has been frequently reprinted, as many as 45 times, mostly since 1980s, little is known about him. Only this bit of information is on record that he edited the unpublished translation of an Ismaili/Shi'i Pakistani writer, Mahomedali Habib (d. 1959).

What is most irksome about Shakir's translation is the blatant and unabashed obtrusion of the peculiar Ismaili/Shi'i doctrines upon the Quranic text. Almost obsessed with his avowed mission of making, by any means, the Quranic text bear out Ismaili/Shi'i beliefs, the translator has taken unpardonable liberties with the text. According to him, the Quran declares, and that too quite explicitly, Ali as the Prophet's chosen successor, who possessed unfathomable knowledge, embodied truth and was gifted with the exceptional retentive power. These qualities of Ali are supposedly stated in these Quranic passages: Al-Baqarah 2:47; al-Ra'd 13: 43; al-Zukhruf 43: 86; al-Haqqah 69: 12 and al-Sharah 94: 7. Likewise, Shakir tries to make readers believe that Verse 3 of al-Maidah speaks of Ghadir Khum; Verse 107 of al-Saffat mentions Hussain; Verses 38 and 124 of Al-Baqarah refer to Imam as the divine guides and Verse 6 of Ali 'Imran delineates *ma'sum*, the divine interpreters of the Quran and Verse 31 of Al-Baqarah specifies *panjatan* (the five holy figures in Shiah Islam - Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Hussain). Not content with superimposing these sectarian beliefs upon the Quranic text, Shakir goes a step further in asserting that even the Bible (!) alludes to Hasan and Hussain under the names Shabur and Shabir respectively.

The above gems of evidence feature in the Subject/Names Indexes of Shakir's translation. Since it carries few explanatory notes, one wonders in the case of a commentary what claims would have been made by him in order to justify the sectarian dogma under the pretext of elucidating the import of the Quran. The occasional notes betray the sectarian mindset of the translator, as is evident from the following examples.

It is common knowledge that verse 3 of Surah al-Maida was revealed on the day of Arafat during Prophet Muhammad's Farewell Pilgrimage, marking the completion of divine revelation. Shakir, however, invests its circumstantial setting with this blatant sectarian twist: "After his last pilgrimage when the Holy Prophet of Islam finally appointed Ali as his successor and *Khalifa* at Ghadir Khum, the above *ayat*... was revealed." Driven by the same sectarian zeal he misinterprets the Quranic expression *ayyam Allah* (verse 5 of Surah Ibrahim, literally the annals of Allah) thus: "The Days of Allah are birth and death anniversaries of the twelve *Masooms* (the infallible Shi'i Imams)

Neal Robinson identifies the following glaring instance of both mistranslation and interpolation of Shi'i beliefs on Shakir's part in translating Verse 55 of al-Maidah:

> Only Allah is your *Vali* and His Apostle and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow.
>
> The notion of someone paying *zakat* while bowing down may seem strange but Shi'ites detect here a reference to a specific incident in the life of 'Ali. It is reported that while he was praying in the mosque at Medina, a beggar entered and no one heeded him. The beggar was about to go away dejected when 'Ali, who was in the bowing position, held out his finger so that he could take his ring as charity.[9]

Discerningly Robinson notes also "the legacy of Mu'tazilism" in Shakir's work, which adds to the unreliability of his translation:

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[9] Neal Robinson, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Quran," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8: 3 (1997), 263.

> Shakir eliminates the reference to the Throne in most instances. When the word *'arsh* is part of a title, he usually renders it as 'Power' or 'Dominion'; for example 'Lord of Power' (Q.7:42 etc), 'Lord of Dominion' (Q.21: 22 etc),... On five occasions he renders the expression *istawa ala'l-'arsh* as 'He is firm in power' (Q7: 54 etc)... He retains the reference to the angels around the throne (Q. 39: 75), but eliminates the references to the throne-bearing angels by rendering *'artb* as 'power': 'those who bear the power' (Q. 40: 7); ... eight shall bear...your Lord's power (Q. 69: 17). Ar Q. 11:7, in his translation, 'it is God's dominion that extends on waters' and in Q.2:255 he translates *kursi* as 'knowledge'.[10]

Shakir's work is marked by a chequered publication history. Originally published in 1968 in Pakistan, it was re-issued by the leading Shi'i body, the World Organization for Islamic Services, Iran and USA. Since 1982, however, it has been reprinted frequently and at a mass scale by Tahrike Tarsile Quran, USA in collaboration with these Shi'i institutions-Muhammadi Trust, Zahra Trust, Aza Khana-e Zahra and Ahlul Bait Foundation. Owing to its aggressive marketing and efficient distribution network, copies of this translation are found in most of the Western libraries. Inexplicably enough, however, this typical Ismaili/Shi'i work has been published recently several times by a Sunni publishing house in India -al-Risala/Goodword, which is headed by Wahiduddin Khan. As a mission publication it has been brought out from Iran, Europe and the US with a view to reaching and winning over a large readership.

In sum, Shakir overbearingly presents a Shi'i version of things Quranic, without any regard for the wordings of the Quranic text or for the history of the circumstantial setting of Quranic verses. This work is, nonetheless, important and valuable for those interested in the study of Shi'i dogmatic presuppositions about the Quran.

Publication details of the first edition:
Karachi, Pakistan, Habib Bank, 1968. 600 pages.

Number of Editions: 50+

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[10] Ibid., 267.

82
Behbudi, Muhammad Baqir
The Quran: A New Interpretation
(1997)

The work introduces Behbudi as a scholar of tafsir and Hadith who taught Islamic theology and jurisprudence in Tehran, Iran in 1990s. It is the English version of his *Ma'ani al-Qur'an*, rendered by Colin Turner, Lecturer in Islamic Studies, University of Durham, UK.Bodied its balto

Behbudi's work is paraded as 'not being a straightforward translation' but rather 'as a combination of translation and exegesis … to reveal some of the layers of meaning expounded by the Prophet and transmitted through the ages by the Prophet's family and companions; it is the fruit of some thirty years of research into the principles of *tafsir* and *hadith* interpretation' (p. xvi). It is indeed a stroke of irony that there is nothing straightforward about this claim. For, Baqir Behbudi, a Shia Quranic scholar, presently teaching in Tehran, unreservedly expresses in this work his narrow sectarian and unsubstantiated views while seeking to pass these off as gems of exegesis. Since the Prophet or his Companions or family members are not cited anywhere in the work and no bibliographic reference is appended either, it is hard to accept its academic credentials. What stands out, though, in the work are innumerable instances of mistranslation, deplorable interpolation of bizarre stories and dubious reports and a pitiful use of inappropriate or awkward English expressions.

How Behbudi is carried away by his sectarian zealotry is best illustrated by the following example in which he twists the import of the Quranic verse in order to discredit Abu Bakr who had accompanied the Prophet during the *hijra* journey:

> On that day the two of them hid in the cave. The Prophet's Companion, instead of showing self-sacrifice and giving his leader heart, was anxious and distressed.
>
> (al-Tawbah 9:40, p. 111)

In a similar vein is his interpretation of al-Kawthar, betraying as it does his peculiar Shiah mind-set:

> So prostrate yourselves in the Prayer and give thanks to God for the birth of your daughter; and when you have done so, slaughter a camel to celebrate her entrance into the world.
>
> (al-Kawthar 108:2, p. 372)

In making such a baseless claim, Behbudi also disregards the chronology of both Fatima's date of birth and the number of the Prophet's daughters.

Driven by the same parochial sectarian motives he interpolates the following additional material (fish with or without scales) in relating the bestowal of divine bounties, especially of manna and quails, upon the Israelites:

> And in the desert of Sinai We raised a canopy of white clouds above your heads… saying: Eat only of the pure things We have created in this case, fish that have scales. But in their hunger and greed they ate also of those fish that have not scales, deeming them pure and lawful.
>
> (Al-Baqarah 2:58, p.5)

Behbudi's hostility towards the Prophet's Companions, particularly *Muhajirun* is sharply revealed in his outrageous interpretation of Surah al-Inshirah:

> The burden of the oath you took which almost broke your back; everyday you had to attend the Sacred Mosque and Pray in the company of the hypocrites, a bitter prospect indeed!... And so henceforth whenever you find the environs of the Ka'ba uncrowned, pray to your Lord.
>
> (al-Inshirah 94:2-8, p. 367)

Equally scandalous is his comment in the context of the Hudaybiya Treaty:

> We granted you victory so that God might forgive the sins you committed by shedding blood at the Battle of Badr, together with those committed afterwards at the Battles of Uhud and Ahzab.
>
> (al-Fath 48:2, p. 306)

His account of creation simply borders on the absurd:

> We have created planets in this solar system from the burning, swirling gases that We tore away from the sun as it revolved … Do they not see that We have created every living thing from this viscous soup of solar gases?
>
> (al-Anbiya 21:30, p. 197)

Likewise, his version of Mary's story, interspersed with lurid details, defies both logic and decency:

> Recount in your Divine Book the story of Mary; she left her family and chose a secluded spot in the east, where she sat to warm her body in the heat of the sun. She was hidden so that she might disrobe. Then We sent the Holy Spirit, who appeared before her in human guise. Mary, who was naked, gasped with fright… Had the intruder attempted to molest her, Mary planned to run, naked though she was.
>
> (Mary 19:17-19, p. 180)

The story of the people of the Cave too, is interlaced with fanciful details:

> We sent thunderbolts so deafening that they [the people of the Cavel] lay unconscious for many years… Just as We rendered them unconscious with a deafening thunderbolt, so too did We awaken then in the same manner
>
> (al-Kahf 18:11 and 20, pp. 172-3)

Prophet Joseph's story, though related graphically in the Qur'an itself, is distorted thus:

> The woman put to him the question of marriage, saying that after obtaining a divorce from the aziz she would gladly buy Joseph and marry him… But in an instant We made the woman appear to Joseph in the form of a baboon; in this way We showed him her real nature.
>
> (Yusuf 12:24, p. 137)

The author's branding of hell-fire as 'the fires of Venus' (p. 174) and *Muhajirun* as those 'whose hearts are diseased' (pp. 118 and 305) is intriguing, to say the least.

Verse 67 of al-Maidah which urges the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to carry out his mission of preaching Islam is grossly mistranslated as a directive to him for appointing his successor. Below is Behbudi's version which has little in common with the meaning of the original Quranic text:

> O Prophet! The Islamic community will need a leader and protector to watch over them once you have departed this earthly life just as the Jews and Christians before them stood in need of new leaders once their prophets had died. If once you are dead, the Islamic community remains leaderless, its fate will be much worse than that of either Jews or Christians. So expound the verse revealed by your Lord which identifies the man chosen to don the mantle of leadership once you have departed this life, if you do not identify him, you will have failed to proclaim God's message as it should be proclaimed. Do not fear those who oppose you in this matter, for God will defend you against them; they are unbelievers.
>
> (al-Maidah 5:68, Behbudi's translation p. 66)

Another loathsome aspect of his mistranslation is his boundless venom against *Muhajirun*, the Prophet's Companions of Makkah, the early Muslims who had selflessly sacrificed their home and hearth and migrated to Madina for the sake of practising and maintaining their Islamic faith. The following instances betray Behbudi's revulsion towards such exemplary Muslims, in which he distorts the original message of the Qur'an beyond recognition:

> Do you see how those *muhajirs* whose hearts are diseased (by evil) rush to protect and support them [the unbelievers]? … These poor wretches who now lie broken and defeated (by God) are the same men with whom you *muhajirs*, in your misguidance, forged ties of friendship and mutual protection … Whatever good these *muhajirs* may have done has been cancelled out by their acts of treachery and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among the losers.
>
> (al-Maidah 5:53-54, Behbudi's translation, pp. 64-65)

The work is further disfigured by many unpardonable mistakes of English idiom and usage. The reader is left bewildered by the use of such largely incomprehensible and odd expressions as 'the unlearned ones' (p. 28), 'dominacality' (p. 138), 'spouting lies' (p. 172), 'black of heart' (p. 172), and 'black of deed' (p. 174).

Since the work reflects scant regard for the norms and principles of *tafsir* and projects a patently sectarian and garbled version of the meaning and message of the Qur'an, one tends to appreciate the wisdom underlying the opposition of some Ulema's to the translation of the Quran. Though printed only once so far, in view of its Western publisher and its translator being a British academician, it has made its way into many libraries in the West.

Publication details of the first edition:

Richmond, Surrey, UK, Curzon, 1997. 719 pages. ISBN: 0700704078.

Number of Editions: 1

Other Reviews:

Mojaddedi, Jawid A, "Review on the Qur'an: A New translation by M. Baqir Behbudi," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 26:1 (1999), 163-164.

83
Nikayin, Fazlollah
Quran: A Poetic Translation from the Original
(2000)

Fazlollah Nikayin (b.1938), an Iranian scholar, is perhaps the first English translator to have embarked upon producing a poetic version of the Quran Fairly recently, Shawkat Toorawa's *The Devotional Quran* (2024) and M. A. R. Habib's and Bruce B. Lawrence's *The Quran: A Verse Translation* (2024) have enriched this sub-genre.

Though not a versified book, the Quran abounds in poetic grandeur. M. M. Pickthall, a British man of letters and a translator of the Quran in 1930 speaks of "the intimate symphony (in the Quranic text), the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy." A. J. Arberry, Sir Thomas Adam Professor of Arabic at the University of Cambridge and also a translator of the Quran in 1955, too, acclaims that "the rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Quran are so characteristic, so powerful, so highly emotive… it is neither prose nor poetry but a unique fusion of both."

Nikayin embarked on this venture partly in order to refute the Orientalists' allegation that the Quran lacks coherence and order. Apart from presenting his fluent poetic translation, he has also provided many brief annotations which explain the Quranic allusions, terms, events, miracles and concepts. He has captured well the remarkable note of gender parity in the Quran, as is evident from his comments on the compatibility between man and wife (pp.42 and 53). Unlike the Bible, he points out, the Quran holds both Adam and Eve equally guilty of disobedience to Allah. Both of them, however, repented and were forgiven by Allah. The Bible, however, lays the blame of the fall squarely on Eve and hence the note of misogyny in the Bible and Church. (p227). At other places too, he brings out the major differences in the Biblical and Quranic

account of a range of personalities and events. This comparison underscores the interpolations which have crept into the Bible and the truth preserved in the Quran. This repudiates also the Orientalists' charge that the Quran is a poor, defective replica of the Bible (p.253). He rejects another misperception against Islam and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that Islam spread by sword. (p.267). Unlike some apologist, pseudo-rationalist Muslim translators like Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Asad and Ahmed Ali, he vindicates the veracity of miracles recorded in the Quran (p.1075).

Although Nikayin is an Iranian Shiah, his work does not betray dogmatic, sectarian presuppositions which disfigure most of the English translations of the Quran by representatives of various sects, be they Deobandi, Shiah, Barelvi, Ahl Al-Hadith etc. His catholicity of mind in some instances is refreshingly edifying. For, he hails Abu Bakr (RA) as the Prophet's "devoted disciple" (p.291) who had accompanied him in his migration from Makkah to Madina. Likewise, in discussing the *ifk* (slander) incident, referred to in Surah Al-Nur, he does not cast aspersions on the conduct of the Prophet's beloved wife, Aishah (RA). (p.562) Generally speaking, Shiahs restrict the definition of *Ahl Al-Bayt* (the Prophet's family) to only Fatima, Ali, Hasan and Hussain. He judiciously includes the Prophet's wives as part of *Ahl Al-Bayt* (p.692). In a couple of instances, however his Shiah bias comes to the fore. While speculating about the contents of the Prophet's speech on his return from his Farewell Pilgrimage, he hints at Ali's succession as Caliph (p.174). Likewise, in equating *kawathar* with the Prophet's daughter, Fatima (RA), he is swayed by sectarian zeal. However, on the whole, his work is singularly free from the notions which are peculiar to Shiahs. Nowhere does he engage in polemics against Sunnis.

As to his versification of the Quranic text, readers may not find it particularly remarkable or charming. Take his version of Surah Al-Fatihah as illustrative:

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful
All Praise be unto God the One,
The Lord of all Dominion,
The Most Beneficent, Most Clement,
The Sovereign of the Day of Judgement.
You only do we worship,
And unto you alone,
Do we appeal for help.
Direct us to the Direct Path,
The path of people You have blessed,
Who were not subjects of your wrath,
Nor strayers lost. (Al-Fatihah 1:1-7)

The use of "Merciful" and "Clement" for *al-raheem* in verses 1 and 3, "direct us to the Direct Path" (verse 6) and "strayers lost" (verse 7) strike a jarring note. The transliteration system followed in the work is atrocious: Al-Pheel for Al-Fil, Al-Dzoha for Al-Zuha, Yaa Sean for Ya Sin and Aali Imraan for Ali Imran. His choice of "apostle" for Messenger is also questionable in view of the former's Biblical overtones. In the Bible an apostle does not enjoy the status which the Quran and Hadith accord to a Messenger or Prophet.

These blemishes apart, this earnest effort for presenting the Quran in a poetic form is a feat for which Nikayin deserves accolades. His non-partisan outlook is laudable, especially against the backdrop of the centuries-old intensely polemical, sectarian divide.

Publication details of the first edition:

The Ultimate Book Inc., Skokie, Illinois, 2000. pp.1084. ISBN: 0-967-4732-0-9

84
Qarai, Ali Quli
The Quran with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation
(2004)

Although there are around sixty English translations of the Quran, this latest one has some features to recommend itself as a noteworthy addition to the field.

The translator is a Shiah scholar from Iran, who has been a regular contributor to the journal *al-Tawhid,* Tehran, Iran and possesses a wealth of experience in the translation of Persian and Arabic religious texts published from Iran. It is good to see that his work is not disfigured by blatant sectarianism. As compared to the earlier translations of the Quran by Shiah scholars – S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali (1964), M.H. Shakir (1968) and Muhammad Baqir Behbudi (1977) – the present work is balanced and moderate on sectarian issues. Qarai does not use the Quranic text or his explanatory notes as a pretext for heaping abusive or derogatory epithets on the Prophet's Companions, particularly Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman. Nor does he twist the meaning of some Quranic verses to justify notions peculiar to the Shiah such as *imamah, taqiyyah, mut'ab, tabarra,* mourning during Muharram, the Ghadir Khum incident and the excellence of Ahl al-Bayt in general and of 'Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Hussain in particular. Yet Qarai includes all these typical Shiah notions in his Index (pp. 878, 901, 908 and 932). He cites several Quranic verses in the Index, which he imagines endorse these beliefs. For example, according to him, Fatimah finds mention in the following Quranic verses: Ali 'Imran 3:61; al-Rum, 30:38; al-Dukhan 44:3, al-Rahman 55:19-20; al-Mujadalah 58:1; al-Hashr 59:9 and al-Insan 76:6 and 22 (p. 901). Going by the same fallacious logic, he maintains that verses 107 of al-Saffat, 22 of al-Rahman and 27-30 of al-Fajr speak pointedly of Hussayn. (p. 908)

Since these speculations are not elaborated or substantiated in the work one cannot take up the issue with Qarai. It is nonetheless amazing to discover how sectarianism prompts one to invest Quranic passages with a contrived meaning. Otherwise who would have ever entertained such fantastic notions that as many as 40 Quranic verses deal with "al-Imam al-Mahdi"; 60 with "Imamah and wilayah"; 68 with the "deniers of Imamah and their followers"; 73 with the "followers of Imamah and another 3 with the "Imams of unfaith and their rule" (p. 908). For students of the Quran, this labyrinthine superstructure of Shiah beliefs with its supposed Quranic mooring is a revelation in itself.

Qarai deserves credit for adopting a fresh approach in his presentation of the meaning of the Quran. In this work the Quranic verses in the original Arabic are divided and subdivided thematically, with their English translation in a parallel column. Qarai calls it a new "phrasal approach" (p.x), as highlighted in the title of the work. Qarai is remarkably successful in applying this approach which is indeed "most useful for those who are eager to collate the Arabic text with the English translation." (p.x) He displays his thorough familiarity with both the art and craft of translation in his Preface (pp. xi-xxii). Illustrative of the same are his illuminating observations on the "absence in the English language of semantically equivalent terms for certain Arabic words, some of which play a key role in the Quranic message such as *taqwa, kufr, ma'ruf, ghayb, ayah, rahmah, ihsan* etc." (p xv). His command over both the source and target languages – Arabic and English – is commendable. He has, therefore, acquitted himself well of the task of producing a faithful and lucid translation. To his credit, he has managed to achieve, in large measure, the objectives which he set for himself that the translation should "1) be able to convey the meaning of the source text in an intelligible manner; 2) have a natural and easy form of expression; 3) convey the spirit and the manner of the original; and 4) produce a similar response in the reader." (p. xv)

Despite his enviable experience and expertise in translating several Persian and Arabic writings into English and his knowledge of the nuances, connotations and idiomatic subtleties of the English languages, Qarai has, at times employed obsolete, archaic and quaint expressions in this work, which leave an odd impression and impede fluent reading. Here are some examples of unhappy and inelegant usage: "God-wariness, abstemiousness, arraigned, baseborn, benefaction, besiegement, blameful, commending to Allah's protection, complaisance, divulgation, gooddoers, gossipers, impugnation, riffraff, ruination and stupefaction." His use of "Apostle" for the Messenger of Allah is equally unacceptable in view of its Biblical overtones. It perhaps amounts to stating the obvious that the biblical concept of apostle falls much short of the Quranic *rasul.*

Qarai's explanatory notes are few and brief. Yet these are of help to the readers in gathering occasional background information or the alternative meaning of Quranic expressions. In some instances, however, Qarai's intent is far from clear, e.g. one cannot make sense of this note: "Moses who is said to have left behind his God and gone away in search of him" (p. 443). An unpardonable typographical error mars the following note; "That is the word of *tawhid,* 'There is god except Allah,' the monotheistic creed of Abraham…" (p. 692). Again, one finds it hard to accept his interpretation that the opening verse of Surah al-Fajr refers to "the month of Muharram" (p. 848). Nor does he specify as to how and why verses 20-27 of Ya Sin are related to Habib al-Najjar (p. 903) and verse 60 of al-Isra, 40 of al-Nur, 205-207 of al-Shu'ara,' 22-23 of Muhammad, 18 of al-Mursalat, 4 of al-Shams and 1-5 of al-Qadr are about the Ummayyads. (p. 934).

Qarai's sensitivity to current issues is evident from his passing remark that the Quran deals with the issues of multiculturalism and pluralism (p. 919). Had he elaborated this point at some length, it will have enhanced the value of the work, making it particularly relevant and suitable in today's socio-political context. The transliteration system is on the whole, of a high standard. It is

therefore, irritating to note that at places the printer's devil has played havoc with it. As a result, several Quranic expressions appear in an unrecognizable form, for example, "Muammad" for the Prophet Muhammad (p. 916).

In sum, notwithstanding its Shiah stance, Qarai's translation is a welcome addition to the corpus.

Publication details of the first edition:

London, UK, Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, 2004. 942 pages, ISBN: 1904063179.

Number of Editions: 3

85
Saffarzadeh, Taherah
The Holy Quran
(2006)

Taherah Saffrzadeh (1936-2008) is an Iranian/Shia scholar of English studies and, a creative writer acclaimed for her poetry. She also holds the distinction of having authored a bilingual translation of the Quran into English and Persian. Far from producing a literal version, she attempted to convey the meaning and message of the Quran. Her annotations, apart from explaining things Quranic, bring into sharper light the literary and artistic marvels manifest in the Quranic text such as alliteration, figurative language, *saja,* and other literary features.

Saffarzadeh's venture reflects her non-polemical approach anchored deep into the love for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and all Islamic sanctities. Illustrative of this are the following examples: Most of the translators render Verse 23 of Al-Baqarah thus:

i. If you are in doubt about the Quran which Allah has revealed to his servant (Prophet Muhammad).

   In a pious strain, Saffarzedeh translates it as follows:

   And if you are in doubt (regarding the Truth) as to what We have revealed to Our Obedient Worshipper (Mohammad the Messenger of Allah).

ii. Usually translators provide a literal translation of Jumuah in Verse 9 of Surah Al-Jumuah:

   When proclamation is made for prayer on the day of congregation.

   However, she retains the original Quranic expression which is familiar to Muslims:

   When the Call is proclaimed for the Congregational Prayer of Friday.

iii. Verse 33 of Surah Luqam is generally translated as:

And dread the Day when no father will stand for his child.

Her rendering highlights Allah's immense might:

And fear from the Day that no father is permitted to avail for his son.

iv. Her translation is often paraphrase like, as she inserts additional words for more clarity. The Quran recurrently instructs us to fear Allah. Her version, however, reads thus: "O people! Fear from the disobedience of Allah's commands." (Al-Nisa 4:56).

Throughout her work she highlights the remarkable note of gender parity in the Quranic text. She faithfully translates all those Quranic passages which deal with the gender issue, especially Verse 34 of Al-Nisa which is grossly twisted by Ahmed Ali, Laleh Bakhtiar and all those under the spell of Feminism/Liberalism. For her, "the single being" (Al-Nisa 4:1) the progenitor of all human beings is Prophet Adam (peace be upon him). Same holds true for her faithful rendering of Verse 189 of Al-Araf. She is firmly persuaded of the distinction held by Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) as the first human being. Swayed by her Shia beliefs, however, she errs in translating Verse 24 of Al-Nisa, as she upholds the notion of *mutá* (temporary/tentative marriage). This blemish apart, she does not interpolate any other Shia dogma into her work.

Like the Saheeh International translators, the three new Muslim American ladies, Emily Assami, Amatullah Bentley and Mary Kennedy, she projects the unadulterated Quranic stance on the gender issue, without the Feminist/Liberal bias. In this lies her admirable contribution to Quranic studies.

Publication details of the first edition:

Tehran, Pars Ketab, pp. 1223. ISBN: 964 8317011

86
McElwain, Thomas
The Holy Quran
(2007)

Although Thomas McElwain was born into a Christian family, in his mature years he was drawn towards the Shiah and Sufi strains of Islam, a point to which we would revert later. He has taught at various Western universities and somehow maintains balance between his Baptist and Islamic beliefs. His interest in the study of Islam is prompted by pious intentions, as he avers. "If Jews and Christians read the Quran with the intention what Islam teachers, it is certainly beneficial for them. If they read it with the intention of finding excuses to incite genocide against the Muslim population, then they had better not read it."

His Quran translation is part of the version of Sacred Scripture in verse, with verse commentaries. Since McElwain's work is profusely interwoven with Biblical passages, it brings to mind two other ventures characterized by parallelism between the Bible and the Quran: i) *The Quran With References to the Bible* by Safi Kaskas and David Hungerford (2016) and ii) *The Quran and the Bible: Text and Commentary* by Gabriel Said Reynolds (2018). The former, a joint undertaking by a Christian and a Muslim scholar, succeeds remarkably in identifying the common ground between the two Scriptures. While presenting the English rendering of the Quranic text, they have indicated in footnotes Biblical passages of a similar import. On the Quranic verses which reject the Christian dogma (Trinity,/ Sonship/and Crucifixion of Prophet Isa (peace be upon him) and many other contentious points, the work maintain silence. So it does not have even an iota of polemics. It breaks cleanly from the centuries old Orientalists' tradition of dismissing the Quran as a poor replica of the Bible. Their work is geared towards promoting better understanding between Christians and

Muslims, as it underscores the identical subject matter of their Scriptures.

In a total contrast to this Pluralistic/Inter Faith Dialogue approach is Reynolds's work, as it brazenly resurrects the Medieval plagiarism thesis against the Quran. Throughout Reynolds harps at the unacknowledged borrowings from the Bible in the Quran. (pp. 70, 92, 96, 97, 99, 101, 103, 114 and 115).

McElwain's work is a messy hotch-poch, as he has interpolated Biblical and Shia beliefs in the body of the English translation of the Quranic text. Since there are not footnotes which could justify the frequent interpolations of non-Quranic material, readers are left puzzled.

He commences his work thus: "A simple Baptist preacher turns his pen/To hymn the message of the Quran again… Muhammad did not come to invent one more creed/But to unite Jew and Christian in need." (p.5)

While discussing Surah Al-Fatihah he extols Ali's priestly ministry and this is followed by the glorification of all Shia Imams by name: "Hasan, Hussain, Muhammad al-Baqir, Jafar as-Sadiq, Al-Kadhim, Ali ar-Riddha, Taqi, Naqi, al-Askeri and Mahdi" (pp.8-9). Readers are at a loss to note any connection between this account of Shia creed and the thrust of Surah Al-Fatihah which constitutes a Believer's supplication to Allah to show him the straight way. Almost every Quranic verse is somehow linked with some Biblical verse. That it is highly confusing and perplexing for readers comes out from the following examples. Before proceeding any further in this direction, first a word about his declaration of his hybrid faith: "Beloved, my faith is simple and direct:/I take Jesus Christ as Lord and select/Lawgivers to my soul and conscience wrecked./And the sweet Bible as my only rule/Of faith and worship and life is this school. Since the Quran affirms these two, I know/Your sovereignty and Sabbath come to show/ Salvation and the heavenly goal in row." (p.13).

His interpretation of Surah Al-Kawthar is problematic. Far from discussing Allah's promised Kawthar (a river in Paradise or abundance of good) to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his detractors lost in oblivion, he harps endlessly on the Prophet's sorrow over the loss of his baby sons. For him, the Surah teaches him to bear with it. (p.456). His other strange explanation surfaces in his note on Suah Al-Fil, recounting an event which took place even before Prophet Muhammad's birth. However, for reasons best known to McElwain, he extols Ali in this context (p.455). Likewise, it is beyond one to grasp his convoluted interpretations of Surahs Al-Kafirun, Al-Falaq and Al-Nas (pp.457-458).

Overall, this work with its abundant, haphazard Christian, Shia and Sufi ramifications, is a hard nut to crack. The author is confused and confusing. Its only redeeming feature is its favourable depiction of Islam, the Quran and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Regrettably the work is devoid of scholarly paraphernalia: Introduction, glossary, bibliography and index, and the Quranic text. More importantly, it is largely incomprehensible and rambling.

Details of the first edition:
Adams and McElwain Publishers, Kuopio, Finland, 2007. Pp.458

87
Shakir, M. H. and Al-Jibouri, Yasin T.
The Quran
(2014)

Born in Iraq in 1946, Al-Jibouri earned his Masters degree in English from Clark-Atlanta University, USA. Apart from this translation, he has revised also the English translations of the Quran by S. V. Mir Ahmad Ali (ISBN: 0-9761870-0-0), Abdullah Yusuf Ali, and M. H. Shakir (ISBN: 0940-368-188); edited *Nahj Al-Balagha* and edited several books on Islam, mostly by Shia scholars.

In his prefatory note, Yasin T. Al-Jibouri, editor of the above English translation of the Quran, proudly states that he oversaw the publication of three English renderings of the Quran - by Mir Ahmed Ali, Abdullah Yusuf Ali and M. H. Shakir under the aegis of Yasin Publications, USA. He informs that he felt "honored and privileged to publish it (M. H. Shakir's translation) and make it available to everyone worldwide." (p.8). Since M. H. Shakir's is an *ad verbatim* plagiarized version, bodily lifted word by word from Abdullah Yusuf Ali's earlier rendering (1934-1937), it raises serious, disturbing questions about the competence of Al-Jibouri as an editor. His connivance or ignorance is damning in either case. How could he, being the editor of both the works, turn a blind eye to such blatant plagiarism? Quoted below are ten sample passages, juxtaposing Shakir's with A. Yusuf Ali's translation, which unmistakably point to Shakir's unscrupulous, unacknowledged borrowings from A. Yusuf Ali's work:

(1) A. Yusuf Ali: "Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgement. You do we worship, and Your aid we seek. Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom You bestowed Your Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and

who go not astray." M. H. Shakir (p. 13): "Praise belongs to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgement. You do we worship, and Your aid do we seek. Show us the straight path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, neither that of those whose (portion) is Your wrath, nor of those who have strayed."

(Al-Fatihah 1: 1-7)

(2) A. Yusuf Ali: "O you who believe! Be not like the Unbelievers, who say of their brethren, when they are travelling through the Earth or engaged in fighting: "If they had stayed with us, they would not have died, or been slain." This that Allah may make it a cause of sighs and regrets in their hearts. It is Allah that gives Life and Death, and Allah sees well all that you do. And if you are slain, or die, in the way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than that all they could amass. And if you die or are slain, Lo! It is unto Allah that you are brought together."

M. H. Shakir (pp. 85-86): "O you who believe! Do not be like the unbelievers, who say of their brothers, when they are travelling through the earth or engaged in fighting, "I they had stayed with us, they would not have died or been killed. "This (is so) that Allah may make it a cause of sighs and regrets in their hearts. It is Allah Who gives life and death, and Allah sees well all that you do. And if you are killed or die in the way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than everything they could amass. And if you die or are killed, lo! You are brought together before Allah."

(Ali 'Imran 3: 156-158)

(3) A. Yusuf Ali: "But those who believe and work righteousness no burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear they will be companions of the Garden therein to dwell (for ever). And We shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury. Beneath them will be rivers flowing, and they shall say: "Praise be to Allah, Who has guided us to this (felicity) ..."

M.H.Shakir (p.177): “But those who believe and work righteousness! We place no burden on any soul but what it can bear, they will be companions of the garden to dwell in it (for ever). And We shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury. There will be rivers flowing beneath them, and they shall say: “Praise belongs to Allah, Who has guided us to this (felicity)...”

(Al-A’raf 7: 42-43)

(4) A. Yusuf Ali: “We settled the Children of Israel in a beautiful dwelling - place, and provided for them sustenance of the best: it was after knowledge had been granted to them, that they fell into schism. Verily Allah will judge between them as to the schisms amongst them, on the Day of Judgement.”

M. H. Shakir (p. 247): “We settled the children of Israel in a beautiful dwelling-place and provided sustenance of the best for them. It was after knowledge had been granted to them that they fell into schism. Truly Allah will judge between them as to the schisms among them, on the Day of Judgement.”

(Yunus 10:93)

(5) A. Yusuf Ali: “Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.”

M. H. Shakir (p. 320): “Invite (all) to your Lord’s way with wisdom and beautiful preaching and debate with them in ways that are best and most gracious. For your Lord knows best who have strayed from His Path and who receive guidance.”

(Al-Nahl 16:125)

(6) A. Yusuf Ali: “Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds: With it came down the spirit of Faith and Truth to your heart and mind that you may admonish, in the perspicuous Arabic tongue.”

M. H. Shakir (p. 438): “Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds: With it came down the Spirit of Faith and Truth to your heart and mind that you may admonish in the perspicuous Arabic tongue.”

(Al-Shu’ara’ 26: 192-196)

(7) A. Yusuf Ali: “Behold! They came on you from above you and from below you, and behold, the eyes became dim and the hearts gaped up to the throats, and you imagined various (vain) thoughts about Allah.”

M. H. Shakir (p. 489); “Behold! They came upon you from above you and from below you, and behold, the eyes became dim and the hearts gaped up to the throats, and you even imagined various (vain) thoughts about Allah.”

(Al-Ahzab 33: 10)

(8) A. Yusuf Ali: “Moreover He comprehended in His designs the sky, and it had been (as) smoke: He said to it and to the earth: “Come you together, willingly or unwillingly.” They said: “We do come (together) in willing obedience.”

M. H. Shakir (p. 536): “Moreover He comprehended the sky in His design, and it had been (as) smoke: He said to it and to the earth: “Come together, willingly or unwillingly.” They said: “We come (together) in willing obedience.”

(Fussilat 41:11)

(9) A. Yusuf Ali: “Or do they intend a plot (against you)? But those who defy Allah are themselves involved in a Plot! Or have they a god other than Allah? Exalted is Allah far above the things they associate with Him.”

M. H. Shakir (p. 627): “Or do they intend a plot (against you)? But those who defy Allah are themselves involved in a plot! Or have they a god other than Allah? Allah is Exalted far above the things they associate with Him!”

(Al-Tur 52: 42-43)

(10) A. Yusuf Ali: "Some faces that Day will be beaming, laughing, rejoicing. And other faces that Day will be dust-stained; blackness will cover them."

M. H. Shakir (p. 716): "Some faces that Day will be beaming, laughing, rejoicing. And other faces that Day will be dust-stained; blackness will cover them."

(Abasa 80: 38-41)

It is mind-boggling that this plagiarized version of M. H. Shakir has been reissued more than 50 times since it came out first in 1968, and from such diverse places as Pakistan, USA, Italy, Iran, UK, and India.

The edition under review is devoid of any notes. This is a blessing in disguise. For, his annotated editions are vitiated by the sectarian Shiah dogmatic presuppositions. His 1982 edition brought out by Tahrike Tarsile Quran, Elmhurst, New York, USA (ISBN: 0940368-17-X) is disfigured by the obtrusion of these Shiah beliefs:

"Ali is the Chosen One." (Al-Baqarah 2:247)

"Ghadir-e-Khum represents the perfection of religion." (Al-Maidah 5:3)

"Husain is the "Great Sacrifice" standing for "zibh 'azim" (Al-Saffat 37: 107).

"The 12 Imams are the Divine Guide" (Al-Baqarah 2: 38)

"Masooms" are the interpreters of the Quran." (Ali 'Imran 3: 6)

"Panjatan" (the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), 'Ali, Fatma, Hasan and Hussain) are described in the Quran (Al-Baqarah 2: 31)

In view of such contents, Neal Robinson speaks of M. H. Shakir as a "well-known twelver Shi'ite" translator of the Quran." (Neal Robinson, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Quran." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8: 3 (1997), p. 261).

The work under review, however, carries only the bare English translation, bereft of any explanatory note. Nor does it contain any glossary, bibliography or index. Such a work does not and cannot advance readers' understanding of the Quran. Furthermore, being a copy of A. Yusuf Ali's work, it has nothing to recommend itself for study.

Publication details of the first edition:

Newington, VA, USA, Yasin Publications, 2014. pp. 744. ISBN: 978-1500405045

88
Nasr, Syed Hossein, et al.
The Study Quran
(2015)

The Study Quran stands out as a major work not only in the field of the English translations of the Quran but also in Quranic studies under the able supervision of the distinguished Muslim scholar of our time, Syed Hossein Nasr. Though Nasr is a Shia, of Iranian descent, he has always championed intra-Muslim unity and harmony among Sunnis and Shia. Throughout his illustrious career he has refrained from any sectarian design.

He has enriched Islamic scholarship vastly, especially his pioneering work on the largely unacknowledged history of Muslim contribution to science and civilization. Sufism has been another domain of Nasr's special interest.

This work is a collaborative venture, with the following Muslim scholars as members of Nasr's team: Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E.B. Lumbard and Mohammad Rustom. In his Introduction Nasr projects the Quran as a theopanic reality, with its inimitable Arabic and soul stirring contents. Classical *tafasir* by Al-Tabari, Al-Razi and Al-Qurtubi are acclaimed. For Nasr, the Quran transcends its evident form of a historical and philological text, as it penetrates every facet of Muslims' life. He brings out profoundly both its transcendence and immanence. Monotheism, Allah's creative wonders, Nature as a sign of His boundless wisdom, and the Afterlife stand out as the main concerns of the Quran. Divine commands, ethics, social justice and spirituality are its other major themes discerningly enough, he highlights the Quran's universal message of guidance for individuals and communities of all time and place.

In this work premium is placed on the preponderant note of monotheism. Nasr's predilection for *tasawwuf* accounts for the two levels of meaning: *zahir* (outward) and *batin* (inward). An essay on this topic delves into Shia and Sufi traditions and draws upon the works of Al-Tustari and Al-Kashani. Walid Saleh's article on *tafsir*

covers a wide range of both classical and modern varieties of *tafsir*. The diversity of approaches to *tafsir* is breathtaking. John Lumbard's essay is focused on translation issues, with a pointed reference to *ijaz* (inimitability) and *iltifat* (stylistic alternation) in the Quran.

This work offers an amalgam of Sunni, Shia and Sufi perspectives on understanding the Quran. Readers thus gain familiarity with varied approaches as reflected in the *tafsir* corpus. An instance in point is the Shia and Sufi strategy of *tawil*. It is refreshing that both the translation and *tafsir* are eloquent, fluent and properly cited. The team of competent translators have ensured consistency and uniformity throughout the work. Readers are likely to benefit much from a massive spreadsheet on the Quranic terms and concepts and their roots. The translation is, on the whole, faithful to the original.

There are annotations on each verse citing the interpretations by both classical and recent *mufassirun.* Readers derive immense benefits from this wide array of *tafsir* scholarship. However, it has resulted in overlapping or repetition in several instances. A rigorous selection and editing would have considerably reduced the size of this voluminous work. Moreover, at places, the viewpoints of various *mufassirun* are irreconcilable with one another. Editors' attention to details and discernment would have resolved this incongruity.

The translation of the Quranic text in elegant English is fluent and facilitates smooth reading for which the team deserves credit. It is a comprehensive work, providing readers with an opportunity to grasp the meaning of the Quran in the broader context of scholasticism, philosophy, Sufism, ethics, sacred history, science, war/peace and eschatology. As a single volume provides such wealth of information, it stands out as an epitome of scholarship.

In sum, it is a largely accurate English translation, with verse-by-verse annotation in a wider context. Those inclined towards Sufism would relish it all the more.

Details of the first edition:
Harper Collins, New York, 2015. Pp. 2000. ISBN: 97806 1125874.

89
Naqvi, Alsyyed Abu Mohammad
The Holy Quran
(2016)

On the opening page of this work the author's following mission statement brings out his Shia mindset and approach to the Quran:

> The Meanings of the Holy Quran: Shia Point of View: The Right of Translation, Tafseer and Taweel of the Holy Quran is only for Masumeen swsa as indicated in Hadees.
>
> "Rasool Allah sawaw said: No doubt I am leaving among you two weighty (the most important) things, the Book of Allah and Ali ibn Abi Talib (swsa) and know that Ali (swsa) is superior than [sic] that Book of Allah for you because he translates the Book of Allah for you." (p.3).

The author of this work, Alsyeed Abu Muhamamd Naqvi is introduced as the one "from the progeny of 10th infallible Imam Ali Naqvi, being 41st generation of Imam." He has written several books, projecting as these do the Shia world view. Some of his titles are: *Shia Exegesis of the Noble Quran* (2013), *Shia Beliefs* (2017), and *Knowing Infallibles* [Shia Imams] *By Quran* (2017).

Now let us turn attention to his above quoted mission statement which abounds in startling revelations about Shia mind and their articles of faith. The source of the above Hadith is another Shia scholar, Sayyid Hashim Al-Bahrani's *Al-Burhan fi Tafsir Al-Quran* in Arabic. From readers' point of view it is both good and important that Naqvi has declared his sectarian agenda in no uncertain terms. It is a blatant Shia work. He does not pretend to pass off his sectarian stance as a representative of the mainstream Islam. One shudders at the thought that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) ever asserted that the Quran interpretation is the prerogative of only Shia or that after his demise, not his Sunnah/Hadith/Sirah, but Ali (RA) would serve as the primary source of Islam, next only

to the Quran. Equally outrageous is the claim in this so called Hadith that Ali (RA) excels even the Quran. What a pity that sectarian dogma blinds one to even commonsense and reason. Naqvi's lamentation that prior to his venture "there was no English translation of the Holy Quran according to the proper Shia school of thought in accordance to [sic] the teachings of the Masumeen [Shia Imams]" (p.3). So in a single stroke he dismisses the following earlier Shia versions of the Quran in English: Ali Muhammad Fazil Chinoy (1954), S. V. Mir Ahmad Ali (1964), M. H. Shakir (1968), Muhamamd Baqir Behbudi (1997) and Ali Quli Qarai (2004).

More serious is the superimposition of peculiar Shia beliefs on the body of the English translation of the Quranic text. For it leaves this vivid impression on readers that the Quran itself preaches what Shia believe. Illustrative of his brazen sectarianism is his following rendering of Surah Al-Fatihah, whereas this Surah has nothing to do with Shiah faith and practices:

> Malik [Master] of the Day of Recompense [Maola Ali swsa will be governor that Day.] It is you we worship (according to the way of Wilayat taught by You), and it is Your we seek help (i.e. help of Maola Ali swasa) keep guiding us Sirat al-Mustaqeem (Maola Ali swsa and his Wilayat).
>
> (Al-Fatihah 1:4-6; p.7)

Worse, he has foisted some more Shia dogmatic presuppositions on his annotations on Surah Al-Fatihah. For him: Wilayat of Allah and of Ali are one and same. Likewise, Sirat-e Mustaqeem (the straight way) "means the way of Wilayat e Ali swsa which will remain established forever." (p.7). He insists that we should thank Allah for following Ali's way.

In the same vein be has interpolated Shia set of beliefs into his translation and interpretation of other Surahs. Here are some gems from Surah Al-Baqarah: "Moala Ali swas is that al-Kitab about which there is no doubt" (Verse 2); "We believe in Ghaib (Imam Qaim swsa and his occultation), and establish Salaat "with the testimony of Wilayat e Ali swsa)" (Verse 3); "Those are upon

guidance (Wilayat e Ali swsa)" (Verse 5); "They do not believe (i.e. they do not believe in Wilayat e Ali" (Verse 8);. "In their hearts is a disease (of doubting Wilayat e Ali swsa), so Allah increased their disease." (Verse 10); "They say: "We believe (in Wilayat e Ali swsa) but when they are alone with their Shaitans (opponents of Wilayat)" (Verse 14); "Hellfire is prepared for the disbelievers (in Wilayat e Ali swsa)" (Verse 24); "Allah taught Adam the names (of the Masumeen Shia Imams swsa)" (Verse 31); "Allah said: "Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance (Moala Ali swsa) comes to you from Me" (Verse 38); "O Children of Israel, …fulfil My covenant (upon you that you will believe in Mohammad swaw and his great Wali Ali swsa)" (Verse 40); "And seek help through *Sabr* [Mohammad saws] and Salaat [Ali saws]" (Verse 45); "And recall when Allah parted the sea for you [due to renewal of the covenant of Wilayat e Ali]" (Verse 50); Other instances in point are: "[Shariah is] difficult for those who associate others with Allah [i.e. who does Shirk in Wilayat e Ali swsa]" (Al-Shura 42:13, p.538) "I swear by the Fajr [Imam Qaim swsa] And ten nights [i.e. ten Imams swsa]. And by the odd [single Allah Tala]. And by the night [Syyeda Fatima swsa] when it passes." (Al-Fajr 89:1-4, p.676) "Did we not expand for you [O Mohammad saw] your chest [though Ali swsa]? And We removed from you your burden which weighed upon your back [i.e. jihad of Ali swsa strengthened your back] So when you have finished [your duties of Nabuwat], then nominate your successor [Moala Ali swsa] (Al-Sharh 94: 1, 2 and 7 p.680) "I swear by the Asr [Qiyam Imam Qaim swsa]. Indeed man [enemy of Aal e Mohammad swsa] is in loss, except those who have believed [in Wilayat e Ali swsa] and done righteous deeds and advised each other about the Haqq [Imamat and Wilayat] and advised each other about Sabr [to be steadfast on Wilayat]. (Al-Asr 103:1-3, p.686). "Woe to the usurper [of the rights of Aal e Muhammad swas]" (Al-Humazah 104:1, p.688). "Indeed we have granted you, [O Muhammad swas] al-Kausar [Fatima Zahra swsa]. So establish Salaat [Wilayat e Ali swas] (Al-Kawthar 108: 1-2, p.690).

Except the intrusion of Shia beliefs without any context or justification, Naqvi makes no effort to explain the Quranic worldview, its value system and its allusions. His few notes serve the only purpose of propagating Shiism.

An irksome feature of his work is that he has retained many Quranic expressions in Arabic, without bothering to explain these. This defeats the very purpose of a translation. For the Quranic/Arabic words appearing in a work leave readers perplexed, as they find these untranslated and unexplained. Some of these examples are: *Salat, Rabb, Asr, Haqq, Maun, Zikr, Malik, Sirat al-Mustaqeem, Nemat, Aalmeen, Hamd, al-Kitab, Ghaib, Rizq, Shaitan, Deen, Qadeer, Fasiqeen, Tawheed, Nabuwwat, Wilayat, Masumeen, Jannat, Haram,* and *Qiyamah.*

A brief Glossary is prefaced to the work which abounds in the explanation of several terms in the characteristic Shia terminology, as for example, *Masumeen Ghasib, Imam, Taghbut, Nasbi* etc. A peculiarity of this translation is that it is bilingual, in both English and Urdu. Numerous typographical errors have further disfigured this work. It lacks Index and Bibliography.

Publication details of the first edition:
PDF copy 2016. pp. 695.

90
Salami, Ali
The Magnificent Quran
(2016)

Ali Salami teaches English at the University of Tehran, Iran. His Introduction carries a cogent critique on some of the earlier English translations of the Quran namely by Alexander Ross (1649), George Sale (1734), E.H. Palmer (1880), Muhammad Markaduke Pickthall (1930), A. J. Arberry (1955), T.B. Irving (1985) and M. A. S Abdel Haleem (2005). His comments on these ventures are, on the whole, judicious and well informed (pp.2-5). However, his praise for Palmer's rendering is exaggerated and misplaced. A. R. Nykl in his article in *the Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 56 (1936), 77-84, has identified his many errors, pointing to his poor grasp over Arabic/Quranic grammar, syntax, idiom and usage.

Like Ahmad Zaki Hammad (2007), he has observed this unique feature in the contents page that instead of mentioning only the Surah titles in Arabic and English, he has also provided their conspectus. It is worth stating that Surah titles are only markers or labels. These do not denote the main topic or message of Surahs. For example, his note on Surah Al-Baqarah (cow) reads thus: "This Surah invites all humankind to divine guidance and all narratives mentioned in it reinforce this theme." (p.6). Same holds true for the remark on Surah Ta Ha, which are *prima facie* abbreviated letters, of which the meaning is not on record. He discerningly clarifies: "It stresses the notion that the Quran has been revealed to the Prophet as a clear proof from his Lord." (p.8). likewise the title Saad is another abbreviated letter. He does well to bring home its thrust: "It makes a clear link between the arrogance of disbelievers in Makkah and Iblis, the rebel." A big advantage of this strategy is that it prepares better readers mentally to grasp the contents of each Surah.

Although there are only few notes, these facilitate a better understanding of the Qurnaic text. It is heartening that though Salami is an Iranian, presumably a Shia, his work is exceptionally free from any sectarian bias. Nowhere does he refer to any Shia notion. On the contrary, he mentions Abu Bakr (RA) by name as the Prophet's companion in the cave on the route to Madina during his *hijra* (migration) (p.159). Nor is he swayed by modernist/liberal/Feminist outlook in twisting the import of Verse 34 of Al-Nisa (p.61). Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and other classical Sunni *mufassirun* are cited as sources for explicating some Quranic verses. It is, however, a pity that his work does not carry the Quranic text. Despite his credentials as a teacher of English studies, the level of language in this work is inexplicably uneven. At places, it confounds readers. For example, his note on the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab (RA) leaves much to be desired. In its present from (p.338) it sounds more as a slur, which does not befit the Prophet (peace be upon him). Likewise, some of his other footnotes are far from clear (pp.496, 513 and 522). His work stands in need of thorough, diligent editing. An instance in point is the following unhelpful note which does not convey anything to readers: "Against obligated animate beings and non-obligated ones and from all inanimate such as poison and so on." (p.522)

The work lacks such reader friendly features as glossary, index and bibliography.

Details of the first edition:

Leilah Publications, Phoenix, USA, 2016. pp. 522. ISBN: 9780 996 333 863

PART – III
BY QADYANIS

91
Khan, Muhammad Abdul Hakim
The Holy Quran
(1905)

Before the publication of the two definitive English translations by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930) and Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934-1937)[11], there existed early English translations by Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan (1905), Abul Fazl (1911-12) and Hairat Dehlavi (1916)[12], followed by the appearance of the Qadyani writer Muhammad Ali's (1917)[13], which is generally recognized as the *first Qadyani translation*.

Ironically enough, Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan (MAHK) has been all along hailed as the first Muslim English translator. For example, in the otherwise authentic and authoritative OIC's *World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Quran*, MAHK's *Holy Quran* (1905) is acclaimed as "the first English translation of the Indo-Pak done by a Muslim."[14] Mofakhkhar

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1. Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936), *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. London, Allen and Unwin, 1930. Up to 2002, more than 150 editions of Pickthall's have been published from all parts of the world.
   - ❖ Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872-1953), *The Holy Quran: English Translation and Commentary*. Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1934-1937. His is the most oft-printed translation, with more than 200 editions on record until 2002.
2. Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan, (c. 1900s), *The Holy Quran*. Karnal, India, Azizi Press, 1905. Only 2 editions published.
   - ❖ Abul Fadl (1865-1956), *The Quran*. Allahabad, India, G.A. Asghar & Co., 1911-1912. 3 editions.
   - ❖ Hairat Dehlavi (d.1929), *The Koran*. Delhi, M.H.Press, 1916. 2 editions.

13 Muhammad Ali (1874-1951), *The Holy Quran: Containing Arabic text with English Translation and Commentary*. Woking, UK, Islamic Review Office, 1917. Up to 2002, 23 editions.

14 Ihsanoglu, Ekmeleddin (Ed.) *World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Quran: Printed Translations 1515-1980*. Istanbul, Turkey, OIC Research Centre for Islamic History, 1986, p. 88.

Hussain Khan shares the same error of perspective in identifying MAHK as "the first Muslim to translate the Quran into English."[15] In his other writing too, Khan showers praise upon MAHK in speaking of him as one of "the pioneer Muslims to present the Quran into English."[16] Worse, he gives credit to MAHK for having "explained some of the Quranic terminology in two pages."[17] No such glossary exists in MAHK's work. It is a pity that Khan appears to have made the above observation, without even having a look at MAHK's work. Neal Robinson's article, though a comprehensive critique in its own right on the sectarian, including Qadyani bias in the translations of the Quran, makes no reference to MAHK.[18] Same holds true for F.V. Greifenhagen's piece, which brands Muhammad Ali's as "the most influential" Ahmadiyya/Qadyani translation while disregarding MAHK altogether.[19] M. Hamidullah.[20] Wm. Sage Woolworth, Jr,[21] S.M. Zwemer,[22] and M. Adil Usmani[23] simply list MAHK among the Quran translators, without specifying his peculiar dogma.

What has gone unnoticed all along in the Quranic scholarship is that MAHK considered as the first Muslim English translator of the

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15 M.H. Khan, "English Translations of the Holy Quran: A Bio-Bibliographic Study," *Islamic Quarterly*, 2 (1986), p. 91.

16 M.H. Khan, *Bibliographic Control of Quranic Literature*. Published by the author. 1993. P. 52.

17 Ibid., p. 53.

18 Neal Robinson, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Quran," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 8:3 (1997), pp. 261-278.

19 F.V. Greifenhagen, "Traduttore Traditore: An Analysis of the History of English Translations of the Quran," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 3:2 (1992), pp. 274-291.

20 M. Hamidullah, *Le Saint Coran*, Brentwood, Maryland, USA, Amana Corporation, 1985. P. lxviii.

21 Wm. Sage Woolworth Jr., "A Bibliography of Koran Texts and Translations," *Muslim World* 17 (1927), p. 283.

22 S.M. Zwemer, "Translations of the Koran," *Muslim World* 5 (1915), P.252.

23 M. Adil Usmani, *Islamic Studies: Literature on the Quran in English Language: A Bibliography*. Karachi, Pakistan, Islamic Documentation and Information Centre, University of Karachi, 1986, p. 21.

Quran actually happens to be *the first Qadyani translator*. For more than a century MAHK has enjoyed this false reputation and received the accolade to which he is not entitled.

MAHK, no doubt, acted boldly in having undertaken the enterprise of translating the Quran into English in early twentieth century. Few Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, rather across the world, could then boast of any mastery over English in the hey-day of Westernization and colonialism. The vanquished and subjugated Muslims of the subcontinent, still reeling under the trauma of having lost their empire in 1857, felt too overawed, unnerved, and enervated by the ever-increasing ascendancy of the West in all walks of life. Far from taking this menacing challenge head on, they preferred to exist only on the margins and led a life of isolation and seclusion. They lacked both the scholarship and requisite tools to respond to their predicament, which was unprecedented in the entire Muslim history. Classical and even later-day Islamic theological texts did not foresee the existence of Muslims as a minority under a hostile, non-Muslim rule. The role reversal, of from being the ruler to the ruled, was too confounding for them. In the given circumstances, Christian missionaries and polemicists, emboldened by the British control over the subcontinent, enjoyed a field day. Several publications in both English and the indigenous Urdu language appeared namely by William Muir, H. Hirschfeld, D.B. MacDonald and W.H.T.Gairdener,[24] which attacked and discredited Islam on every conceivable front. Some branded Islam, especially its Scripture – the Quran, its articles of faith and its theology as a poor, heavily borrowed replica of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Islam, these works insisted, is merely a Christian heresy and Muslims should, therefore, revert to the original, true faith Christianity. For reinforcing the same message,

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3. William Muir, *The Coran: Its Composition and Teaching* (1877) _____ The Life of Mohamet (1894)
   H. Hirschfeld, *New Researches into the Composition of the Quran* (1902)
   D.B. MacDonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, (1909)
   W.H.T. Gairidener, *Inspiration – A Dialogue* (1909)

some wantonly indulged in Prophet Muhammad's character assassination, projecting him as an impostor. These works held Christianity synonymous with love, peace and progress whereas Islam with violence, bloodshed, bigotry and obscurantism

In the initial years of his writing career Mirza Ghulam Ahmed (1835-1908), no doubt, tried to defend Islam against these onslaughts through his rejoinders to missionaries in Urdu. Gradually, however, he drifted towards apostasy and claimed himself to be a Messenger of God! Some unsuspecting Muslims, especially those living in the vicinity of the Mirza's birthplace, Qadiyan, a small town in the undivided province of Punjab in British India fell victims to his chicanery. MAHK typifies such naïve Muslims who were carried away and misled by the Mirza's initial academic works against missionaries in defence of Islam. Overwhelmed by the Mirza's impressive credentials of working for the cause of Islam, they could not and did not see through his imposture.

Unlike most of the other Qadyani translations of which the title or sponsor or publisher underscores their Qadyani credentials,[25] MAHK's title page provides no clue whatsoever about his Qadyani affiliation. On the contrary, the following pedantic and pretentious

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4. The italicized portion in each Qadyani translation below points to its Qadyani/Ahmadiyya origin:
    a. Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Quran*. Lahore, *Ahmadiyya Anjuman-i-Ishaat-i-Islam*, 1920.
    b. Sher Ali, The Holy Quran, Published under the auspices *of Hadbrat Mirza Tabir Ahmad, Fourth Successor of the Promised Messiah and Supreme Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam*. Tilford, UK, Islam International Publications Ltd., 1997.
    c. Malik Ghulam Farid, *The Holy Quran*. Published under the auspices of *Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Fourth Successor of the Promised Messiah and Head of the Ahmadiyyah movement in Islam. Qadian, India, Nezarat Nasbro-Ishaat,* 2003.
    d. Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, *The Holy Quran. Successor of Promised Messiah and the Second Caliph: Qadian, India, Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya,* 1947-1963.

announcement on its title page misleads readers into taking it as a work by an orthodox, devout Muslim scholar whose mission is to vindicate, ironically enough, "the great miracles and prophecies of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):"[26]

> The Holy Quran with short notes based on the authentic Traditions of the Prophet, or the Old and New Testaments or Scientific truths. All fictitious romance, questionable history, and disputed theories have been carefully avoided.[27]

Nor does MAHK's Preface reveal any of his dogmatic presuppositions. He is so particular about covering up his antecedents that he does not acknowledge indebtedness to even his teacher, Hakim Nooruddin (1840-1914), a Qadyani scholar of the day. The only evidence one gathers about MAHK's association with Nooruddin is from the recent (2005) posthumously published English translation of the latter, brought out by his son and daughter-in-law, Abdul Mannan Omar and Amatul Rahman Omar. They unravel thus the teacher-disciple relationship between Nooruddin and MAHK:

Nooruddin was a scholar and teacher of the Holy Quran with international fame and recognition. This is proven by the fact that several English translations of the Quran have been done by his students under his direct or indirect influence and guidance. These include translations by Dr Abdul Hakim, Muhammad Ali, and Sher Ali's[28] (*all Qadyani translators of the Quran*).

This circumstantial evidence apart, let us examine MAHK's *The Holy Quran*, especially his explanatory notes in order to ascertain his mindset. On scrutiny, of which the details follow, it emerges that despite his craftiness in suppressing outwardly his adherence to Qadyanism, his elucidation of the meaning of the Quran is vitiated

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26 Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan, *The Holy Quran.* Karnal, India, Azizi Press, 1905.

27 Ibid.

28 Allamah Nooruddin, *The Holy Quran*. Rendered into English by Amatul Rahman Omar and Abdul Mannan Omar, Hockessin, D.E., Noor Foundation International, 2005, p. 71A.

by unmistakable Qadyani colouring. Take the following instances as illustrative:

1. Throughout his work, MAHK hails Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a false claimant to Messengership and the founder of Qadyanism as "the Promised Messiah," as foretold in Hadith corpus.

Verse 55 of Ali 'Imran reads: "Recall when Allah said: O Jesus! Surely I will make you die and raise you up to Me…" Brazenly, MAHK hoists his typical Qadyani creed on this Quranic passage, though it has nothing to do with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's lies:

> Now the Jesus, Son of Mary, who was promised to appear from amongst the Muhammadans as a spiritual leader, is Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian.[29]
>
> The traditions of the Prophet prove that the present age borders on resurrection and that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian is the promised Mehdi and Messiah.[30]

Verse 94 of al-An'am carries a stern warning against the impostors parading themselves as the recipients of divine revelations. In his explanatory note on even this crystal clear Quranic verse, MAHK has the audacity to project Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as an invincible religious authority, above and beyond any challenge:

> The opponents of the Promised Messiah have also been claiming to meet his challenge in Arabic productions but without actual success.[31]

Verse 7 of Yunus censures those negligent of numerous divine signs in and around them. This provides MAHK with a stick to thrash the Muslims of the day who refused to pay any heed to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's fabrication of his preposterous falsehood:

> It is the result of the damnable presumptions which deprived the Jews of the belief in Christ; the Christians, of the blessings of Islam, the Muhammadans, of the graces of the Second Messiah.[32]

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29 Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan, *The Holy Quran*, op. cit., p.123.

30 Ibid., p. 127.

31 Ibid., p. 245.

32 Ibid., p. 330.

His harangue against Muslims intensifies, as he twists the import of the above Quranic verse for asserting the so-called truth of Qadyanism:

> This verse is a forewarning to the Muslims that in the fourteenth century after their prophet they shall become like the Jews and that a like of Jesus shall come to preach the truths and reform the corruptions. Exactly the same hath happened; the like of Jesus or the second Messiah has appeared, but the Muhammadans are opposing him obstinately and with malice, giving no regard to the vast number of prophecies that have realized and to the miraculous phenomena occurring for him, e.g. the protection of Qadian [the birth place of Qadyanism) against general plague; the deaths of his inveterate opponents in his life time; his irresistible conquest of human hearts notwithstanding the bitterest opposition of the so-called Moulvies [Muslim religious scholars] all over the Islamic world; the unparalleled rapidity of the progress of his mission; the predicted security of his life and honour against all human hands and stratagems.[33]

Verse 32 of al-Rum states in very general terms mankind's vulnerability in terms of divisions and subdivisions among them. For reasons best known only to him, MAHK pounces upon this as an argument for the veracity of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's mission:

> This verse refers to the present age when the difference has reached the extremes and the promised Messiah is preaching the obvious truths in them. Therefore they [Muslims] are suffering the greatest punishment in the form of worldly disgrace and failure, plague, famine and moral degeneration.[34]

Verse 47 of Ha Mim al-Sajdah underscores Allah's limitless knowledge. However, MAHK's explanatory note on the same recounts "the prophecies of the promised Messiah viz. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian"![35] What is more bewildering and outrageous is that he lists the following as "prophecies that have proved true in this age," regarding Mirza Ghulam Ahmad:

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33 Ibid., p. 332.

34 Ibid., p. 609.

35 Ibid., p. 697.

> In the fourteenth century after Muhammad, the second Jesus will appear. The Mehdi shall call together his men in a village named Qada to a number equal to that of the men of Beder *viz.* 313.[36]

The parallelism between *Sahaba* and the misguided followers of the Mirza is more crudely presented thus:

> "Visions, dreams and revelations were very general amongst the companions of the prophet as well as they are now amongst the proselytes of Mirza Gulam Ahmad, the second Messiah."[37]

2. MAHK's work bristles with all the trappings peculiar to Qadyanism. At places, he twists the meaning and message of Quranic verses beyond recognition. Swayed by prsuedo-rationalism, he refuses to accept the Quranic version of the two angels-Harut and Marut instructing the unbelievers of Prophet Solomon's day in magic, as part of their trial ordained by Allah. For the Quran itself clarifies that their instruction was always accompanied by the warning: "We are but a temptation, so do not blaspheme." (Al-Baqarah 2:102). MAHK's distorted translation of the verse, however, runs thus:

> And nothing was sent to any two angels at Bable, Harut and Marut: and *there is nothing like the current story* that they taught no man until they had said, verily we are a temptation, therefore do not fall in infidelity: so men learned from those two something by which they might make a division between a man and his wife.[38]

His mistranslation, as is evident from the above italicized portions, stems from his unwillingness to accept that angels may come down to the earth in the human form. Angels being conscientious servants of Allah may perform any assignment entrusted to them by Allah. And Allah being Omniscient and All-Wise may decide to get any deed performed by them.

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36 Ibid., p. 704.

37 Ibid., p. 445.

38 Ibid., pp. 45-46.

3. Qadyanis hold strange, rather bizarre beliefs about Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). For them, he was crucified yet he did not die on the cross. Rather, he walked away, went all the way thousands of miles away to Kashmir, India and had his natural death there and lies buried at Khan Yar, Srinagar, Kashmir, India. In line with this odd set of beliefs MAHK first mistranslates Verse 55 of Ali 'Imran and offers this mind-boggling account of Prophet Jesus's career:

> Jesus was put to the cross at an age of thirty-three. After an escape from the cross he passed the rest of his life in visiting various countries… From Nepal he passed through Tibet to Cashmir where he met the children of Israel…the lost sheep… In Cashmir he became known by the name of Josaif… At an age of 120 years, he died at Srinagar and was buried in a quarter known by the name of Khan Yar.
>
> In reality there is not a single verse or tradition asserting the ascension of Christ with his body alive to the heavens… Now the Jesus, son of Mary, who was promised to appear from amongst the Muhammadans as a spiritual leader, is Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian.[39]

4. Rejection of miracles, Jinn and physical, material bounties of Paradise is another typical Qadyani article of faith, which smacks of pseudo-rationalism and apologia. It is not therefore surprising to note MAHK's garbled version of Prophet Jesus's miracles, outlined in Verse 110 of al-Maida. While the Quran affirms that by Allah's leave he spoke in the cradle, breathed life into the likeness of a bird, healed those born blind and leper, and caused the dead to come forth, MAHK's explanatory notes deny these miracles. Instead he presents this ludicrous account:

> Breathing life into the likeness of a bird: This is a figurative expression of the spiritual elevation and quickening which was imparted to men of abilities by the company and teachings of Jesus.

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[39] Ibid., pp. 116, 117,122 and 123.

> Healing those born blind and leper: The original word may also mean "declared free."
>
> Causing the dead to come forth: This is a figurative expression meaning the imparting of spiritual life to those who were devoid of it.[40]

By the same token, he has the temerity to deny and misrepresent the miracles Allah had bestowed upon Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him). The Quran informs that he was taught the language of birds, given control over Jinn and followed the speech of ants and hoopoe (Verses 16,17,19 and 22 of al-Naml). Here are MAHK's fanciful explanations of the above:

> Language of birds: In Arabic the rider of a swift horse is also called as 'Ter' or bird. Thus the speech of birds may mean cavalry drills.
>
> Jinn: This refers probably to giantic (sid Amelekites who were admitted to Solomon's troops.
>
> Ants: When Solomon passed by the habitations of the Amorites, they ran into their houses from fear of being pressed into the construction work.
>
> Hoopoe: the Hud Hud of the Quran is either the same as Hadad of the Bible i.e. a captain of the host who had turned adversary to Solomon (I Kings 11-17) or some other person of high responsibilities in the armies of Solomon.[41]

In a similar vein he denies the other miracles granted to Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them)-mountains and birds glorifying Allah with the former and devils diving for the latter (Verses 79 and 82 of al-Anbiyya). MAHK misconstrues mountains as "the hilly tribes, and the birds, the chiefs or poets" and devils as "the gigantic labourers from amongst the Philistinians and Amelekites."[42]

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40 Ibid., pp. 228-229.

41 Ibid., pp. 574-576.

42 Ibid., pp. 507-508.

In his audacious attempt to deny the existence of the species of Jinn he goes to such absurd lengths in mistranslating the Quranic address to the company of Jinn and men (Verse 131 of al-An'am) as "O savage and civilized portions of mankind." For he believes that "the word jinn has figuratively been used for savages in comparison to civilized men."[43]

5. An irksome note of apologia, betraying MAHK's subservience to the Western thought and ways, mars his elucidation of the Quranic command for the amputation of a thief's hand (Verse 38 of al-Maidah). His opposition to the punishment prescribed by the Quran borders on projecting it as barbaric and inhuman:

> "To infer from these words that he who steals anything, however slight, and from whatever place, is to have his hand cut off, without any other consideration, is altogether against the general sense of the verses, incompatible with Stay human weakness and fallibilities, and against the common Asense and reason."[44]

6. Qadyanism flourished in the hey-day of British imperialism in India and enjoyed state patronage. It is not therefore so scandalous to find MHKA citing the Quran in order to persuade Indian Muslims of the day to keep serving unquestioningly their British masters. His servility comes to the fore in his slanted elucidation of the Quranic directive to believers for obeying Allah, the Messenger and those charged with authority from among them. (Verse 59 of al-Nisa). Without any scruples MAHK projects the British usurpers as the Quranic *Ulu al-Amr* (rulers):

> That is, you should obey your rulers, of whatever nation or religion they be.[45]

Absolute loyalty to the British colonialists, being an article of faith for the Qadyanis of the day, surfaces also in the other Qadyani translator, Muhammad Ali's commentary on the Quran (1917) While trying to bring out the import of the above mentioned Quranic verse (59 of al-Nisa), he exhorts Muslims:

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43 Ibid., p. 254.

44 Ibid., p. 209.

45 Ibid., p. 176.

> The passage lays down a most important rule for the guidance of Muslims. Above all authorities with a true Muslim is the authority of Allah and His Apostle, but those in authority are also to be obeyed. Among those in authority are included the rulers of a land, though they may belong to an alien religion…[46]

7. MHKA's whimsical identification of Gog and Magog with modern Western nation-states illustrates how the interpolation of personal, subjective opinions, not substantiated by any primary Islamic source, may wreak havoc on the Quranic text:

> It is being proved from the Bible, the traditions of the Prophet, Histories and Dictionaries that Gog and Magog are the descendants of Japheth and that the Russians and the European belong to them… In accordance with these prophecies, the possessions of Russia, Germany, France and Britain commenced on the four corners of Arabia and Syria, after a thousand years of Hijra. They are overrunning Islamic countries since 1591 A.D.[47]

Equally amusing and flimsy is MAHK's other claim that human beings existed on the planet earth even before Prophet Adam's emergence on the scene:

> It appears from the Holy Quran and some of its commentaries that some nations preceded Adam on the earth.[48]

It is indeed inexplicable how for more than a century MAHK's work, abounding in Qadyani contents and other serious blemishes, escaped critical scrutiny. It, nonetheless, deserves the unenviable distinction of being the *first Qadyani* English translation of the Quran. As to the place of the *first Muslim English translation*, it rightfully belongs to Abul Fazl's *The Quran* (1911-1912).

Publication details of the first edition: Karnal, India, Azizi Press, 1905, 917 pages.
Number of Editions: 2

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46 Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Quran*, Lahore, 1920, p. 218.

47 Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan, op. cit., pp. 471 and 473.

48 Ibid., p. 19.

92
Ali, Muhammad
The Holy Quran
(1917)

Muhammad Ali's is the first major Qadyani English translation of the Quran. After graduating from Government College, Lahore Pakistan in 1894, he soon distinguished himself as the chief exponent of Qadyanism. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), founder of Qadyanism trusted highly Muhammad Ali's competence and expertise as a writer and secured Ali's prior approval of all of his writings. Ali was the founder editor of the magazine *Review of Religions* published from Qadyan in 1901, with the avowed aim of promoting Qadyanism. In addition to producing the translation of and commentary on the Quran in English and Urdu, both of which are independent works, he authored a general, introductory work, *The Religion of Islam* which was translated into many major languages, mostly European ones, with a view to converting people to Qadyanism. This project was aggressively taken up by the Qadyani missionary outfit, Isha'at-i Islam, Lahore, Pakistan. At Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's behest and as part of Qadyani mission, Ali produced this translation in 1917. Although it has been reprinted, at least, 25 times, it does not, curiously enough, enjoy the status of being the official Qadyani translation of and commentary on the Quran. This distinction is held by another Qadyani translation by Sher Ali. Before his death in 1951, Muhammad Ali thoroughly revised his work in 1950. Since 1985 it has been issued regularly from the US and its copies are available in almost every library in the West.

Ali's is, no doubt, an ambitious and seemingly impressive undertaking. For it contains around 3,000 explanatory notes, an extensive Preface dealing with the Islamic articles of faith. His translation is nonetheless strictly literal, as Hafiz comments:

> Maulvi Muhammad Ali with commendable zeal aimed at correctness, rather than at nicety in the choice of expression, and this translation is professedly literal.
>
> This may account to some extent for its prosaic character while the fact that the translator is working at two languages (Arabic and English), neither of which is his own, accounts excusably for a somewhat extraordinary use of English and occasional obscurity.[49]

Hafiz substantiates the above by reproducing Ali's rendering of Verse 30 of Surah al-Rum, pointing out that Ali's choice of expressions "is not a very happy one, and puzzles the mind."[50]

Ghulam Sarwar, in his cogent critique of Ali's work, lists as many as 23 instances of his loose phrases, awkward constructions, poor command over English, such literalism which confuses readers, his jumbling together words which do not carry any sense, mistakes of idiom, obscurity of meaning and other stylistic and linguistic errors.[51] For reasons best known to him, Sarwar, however, does not say a word about Ali's Qadyanism.

More serious, rather outrageous is Ali's distortion of the Quranic text, as he denies miracles and the Quranic statements about Paradise and Hell in a pseudo rational vein. S. Habibul Haq Nadvi elaborates this point thus:

> He first projected and amplified the death of Jesus in order to justify the claim of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to the Prophethood. The existence of angels and jinns was denied by him. They, according to him, symbolize the forces of good (*khair*), (or the will of God) and the forces of evil (*sharr*) respectively. Paradise is not real: it signifies the pleasure of God and Hell His wrath. Muhammad Ali, like Asad, rejected the *mu'jazat* (miracles) and strained Arabic grammar to justify his point.[52]

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49 Hafiz, "A Rendering of the Quran," *Islamic Culture* 4:2(1930), 327-328.

50 Ibid., p. 328

51 Sarwar, Ghulam "The Translation of the Quran by Maulvi Muhammad Ali," in the Introduction: A Review of the Previous Translations of the Holy Quran" in his *Translation of the Holy Quran*, Karachi, National Foundation, 1973, pp., xxxvi-xliii.

52 S. Habibul Haq Nadvi, "Book Review," *Muslim World Book Review* 10: 1 (Autumn 1989), 7.

Neal Robinson too, identifies Ali's playing havoc with the Quranic text, as Ali rejects the miracles stated in the Quran out of his obsessive pseudo-scientific rationalism:

> The earlier translation by the Ahmadi scholar Muhammad Ai was likewise fairly literal, but it was accompanied by extensive notes explaining that the miracles are to be understood figuratively; the story of the bird is a parable how by breathing the truth into his disciples Jesus made them rise above their earthly cares; the statement about the healing of the blind and the leper refers to healing of the spiritually blind and sick; and the statement about raising the dead refers to reviving the spiritually dead.[53]

Illustrative of the same approach is Muhammad Ali's garbled version of Prophet Solomon's miraculous powers granted to him by Allah. The Quranic passage – Verses 16-44 of al-Naml relates his subjugation of the armies of jinn and birds and his exceptional ability to comprehend the speech of birds and ants. Robinson lays bare Ali's mutilation of the above Quranic account both in his translation and his notes:

> Muhammad Ali retains the references to the armies of 'jinn' and 'birds,' but explains in his notes that he former were mountain tribesmen whom Solomon had subjugated, whereas the latter were probably his cavalry who were called 'birds' because of their swiftness. Solomon's knowledge of the speech of birds is explained as a metaphor for his use of birds for conveying message. His ability to communicate with the ants is disguised in Muhammad Ali's translation because the words 'the valley of ants' and 'ant' in Verse 19 are rendered as 'valley of the Naml' and 'a Namlite' respectively, and there is a note suggesting that the reference is to a tribe. Similarly the Arabic word for 'hoopoe' is simply transliterated as Hudhud and treated as the name of a person. Finally, there is a note arguing that the *ifrit* of the *jinn* was probably 'one of the Amalekites who were men of large stature…[54]

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53 Neal Robinson, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Quran," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8: 3 (1997), 270.

54 Ibid., pp. 270-271.

Being a spokesperson of Qadyanism, Ali distorts the import of the Quranic verses on the finality of Allah's Last Messenger. His denial of miracles recurs in the later translations of Muhammad Asad and Ahmed Ali. In that lies Ali's legacy.

Publication details of the first edition:

Woking, UK, Islamic Review Office, 1917. 1275 pages.

Number of Editions: 25+

Other Reviews:

- Hafiz, "A Rendering of the Quran: Muhammad Ali's Translation of the Quran," *Islamic Culture* 4:2(1930), 324-328.
- Sarwar, Ghulam "The Translation of the Quran by Maulvi Muhammad Ali," in the Introduction: A Review of the Previous Translations of the Holy Quran" in his *Translation of the Holy Quran*, Karachi, National Foundation, 1973, pp., xxxvi-xliii.

93
Ahmad, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud
The Holy Quran
(1947-1963)

After the death of the founder of Qadyanism, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, his son Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad took over as "the successor of the Promised Messiah and the Second Caliph." In 1915 a team of Qadyani activists, headed by Sher Ali, embarked upon producing an English translation of and commentary on the Quran which aimed at proving somehow that the peculiar Qadyani beliefs are borne out by the Quranic text. They produced a three-volumed translation which came out between 1947 and 1963. Prefaced to this work is an extensive introduction, originally written in Urdu by Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad. The same introduction features also in his Urdu tafsir entitled *Tafsir Kabir*. So, Ahmad is not the author of this three-volumed English translation. However, some editions of this work ascribe its authorship to him.

Being the official Qadyani version, it has all the trappings of the beliefs peculiar to Qadyanis their taking Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the Promised Messiah, their rejection of the finality of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the Last Messenger, their ridiculous notions about Prophet Jesus's death and his burial in Kashmir and their denial of miracles mentioned in the Quran. A detailed analysis of the above features in the Review on Sher Ali's translation, included in this volume. For what is said about Sher Ali's venture, especially his mindset and the features of his work, holds true in an equal measure for Ahmad's work. It is worth-stressing that Sher Ali's work was prepared under Ahmad's guidance and supervision in his capacity as the religious head of Qadyanis.

Ahmad's Introduction, prefaced to his translation, contains a detailed account of Qadyanism. He claims to have received even divine support in his Qadyani mission. His other equally outrageous claim is that "the Quran, which has become like a closed book in the hands of the Muslims, has again been made an open book…through the instrumentality of the Promised Messiah (Mirza Ghulam Ahmad)." Going a step further, he projects himself as the recipient of divine revelations: "Whenever any teaching or doctrine contained in the Quran is made the target of criticsm on the basis of some new scientific development, God reveals to me the true answer contained in the Quran." Like other Qadyni translators, he is guilty of superimposing audaciously typical Qadyani beliefs on the Quranic passages which have nothing to do with it. James Robson reiterates the same irksome feature of Ahmad's work:

> Ahmadiya beliefs often appear, occasionally in connection with passages which seem unconnected with them.[55]

Publication details of the first edition:

Qadyan, India, Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya, 1947-1963. 3 Volumes. 2917 Pages.

Number of Editions: 5

Other Review:

- Robson, James *"The Holy Quran with English translation and Commentary,"* Muslim World 39:3 (1949), 294-295.

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[55] James Robson "Review on the *Holy Quran*," *The Muslim World* 39:3 (1949), 295.

94
Ali, Sher
The Holy Quran
(1955)

Since his early days Sher Ali made a mark as a Qadyani activist and writer, devoted wholly to the tendentious notions of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), founder of Qadyanism, who had declared himself a prophet. Sher Ali was a member of the Qadyani team that had produced in 1915 the first part of the Qadyani English translation of the Quran. After Ghulam Ahmad's death, Sher Ali pledged his allegiance to Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, the son and successor of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. He was the main contributor to the official Qadyani English translation published in three volumes (1947-1963). Since 1955, however, a single volume edition crediting the translation to Sher Ali has been regularly issued by the official Qadyani missionary publishing house – Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation, Rabwah, Pakistan.

It is claimed in 1982 edition of this work that its more than 1,60,000 copies have been published from Holland, India, Pakistan, Ghana, Hong Kong and USA. In 1997, a thoroughly revised, rather corrected edition of his appeared under the supervision of Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the present head of Qadyanism, which is critically analysed below.

One recent baffling trend in the field of English translations of the Quran is the appearance of 'posthumously revised editions' of original versions. Instances in point are the publication of thoroughly and not so thoroughly revised versions of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Marmaduke Pickthall, and S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali. This revision activity, though a welcome development in its own right, raises more questions than it answers. How can certain views be attributed to the author who did not profess these?

The work under review introduces as many as 910 changes in the late Sher Ali's translation of 1955. Not only are the interpolations numerous, these also tend to ascribe to the author such views which he did not hold. What is more deplorable is that the Publisher's Note does not spell out the range and rationale of this major change in the tenor of the work. Readers are curtly told: 'It has been deemed useful that some alternative translations and suggestions and some explanatory notes wherever necessary, should also be provided separately in the form of an appendix. This we have done with the hope that it will help the reader to understand the meaning more conveniently' (p.1). This is very confusing. If the original version is perfectly correct, what is the need for the alternative version which is so painstakingly provided at the foot of the original? Moreover, in the case of two conflicting versions readers are not given any clue as to which of the two is to be taken as the authoritative viewpoint and on what basis. This point comes out sharply in the following illustrations:

1. Sher Ali translates verse 7 of Surah al-Fatihah thus; 'Those who have not incurred *Thy* displeasure.' In so doing, like all other English translators of the Quran he provides the ellipted pronoun in italics. In all fairness, his translation is faithful in bringing out the import of the verse. However, the revised version of the same verse reads thus:

   Those who have not incurred displeasure. The reader should not be misled by the word "Thy' in italics to believe that the word *magdub* is confined only to the wrath of God incurred by the Jews. This expression is open and covers not only the wrath of God, but also the wrath of people which they may incur (p.679)

The revised version itself is downright 'misleading' and confounding in mixing up the wrath of people and of God.

2. In much the same vein, the revised translation of verse 4 of Surah al-Nisa about polygamy appears with a bizarre twist, thanks to the interpolation of the Editor's whimsical viewpoint that one can marry more than one wife, subject to the following

conditions: (i) society doing injustice to orphans and (ii) in the aftermath of war. 'And if you fear that the society may fail to do justice in the matter concerning orphans in the aftermath of war then marry women of your choice two or three or four.' (p. 692)

3. Another instance of taking unpardonable liberty with both the Quranic text and the late Sher Ali occurs in the revised translation of verse 60 of Surah al-Nisa, The original version being faithful to the Arabic text is: 'O you who believe! Obey Allah, and obey His Messenger and those who are in authority among you.' The revised version includes even non-Muslims, resorting to semantic jugglery: 'Some translators understand it to mean… Muslim authority alone. In this particular instance the preposition (*min*) only plays a role of linking the preposition (*kum*) with the word (*Ulu al-Amr*) in a possessive relationship and the translation should be: 'Those who are in authority over you' (p. 695).

4. Another instance of interpolation is verse 258 of Surah al-Nisa which is explained at length in terms of the Qadyani understanding of the verse (pp. 700-3)

5. That the Egyptian ladies cut their hands when Prophet Joseph (peace and blessings be upon him) appeared before them, as is related in the Quran and recounted correctly by Sher Ali in his translation of verse 32 of Surah Yusuf, is dismissed as an 'inconceivable event' by the Editors. For them its 'rightly understood metaphorical meaning is that they (the Egyptian ladies) accepted defeat by considering him inaccessible and beyond the reach of their hands' (p. 748)

6. That after eating of the forbidden tree both Adam and Eve became aware of their private parts and tried to cover themselves with Garden leaves, as is stated in the Quran and accurately rendered by Sher Ali in his translation of verse 122 of Surah Ta Ha, is contested by the Editors of the present revised edition:

> Most translators have taken the scenario too literally … It was their (*swatuhuma*) weakness which became known to them… This weakness was psychological and internal coverage can only mean seeking forgiveness. As such the leaves of the garden must be understood metaphorically… (p. 779-80)

7. Both the late Sher Ali and the Editors of the edition under review persist in their mistranslation of verse 19 of Surah al-Naml in misconstruing the ant with the Naml tribe in the context of the march of the Prophet Solomon's army (p. 801). Likewise, both of them distort the Quranic account of the appearance of the beast of the earth who will speak to mankind, as is mentioned in verse 83 of Surah al-Naml, with a minor difference that while Ali mistranslates *al-Dabbah* as the germ who will wound people, the Editors refer to it as 'the creature which shall injure people." (p.805)

8. The miracle that the mountains joined Prophet David (peace and blessings be upon him) in praising Allah, as is recorded in the Quran and duly reported by Ali in his rendering of verse 19 of Surah Sad, is rejected by the Editors in favour of this outrageous interpretation: "The word "al-Jibal" may apply to the powerful mountainous tribes which were subjugated by David or it may also refer to the mineral wealth of mountains which was well exploited in his time.' (p. 832)

9. In verse 5 of Surah al-Muddaththir the Quran directs the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to purify his clothes. Whereas Ali mistranslates this 220 polas the directive for purifying his heart, the present Editors have gone a step further in suggesting that the intended Quranic directive to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is to purify his Companions. (p. 877)

Only in a few instances, such as the translation of Al-Baqarah 2:223; al-Qasas 28:77 and al-Hadid 57:22, is the present revised version an improvement upon Ali's earlier faulty rendering.

Notwithstanding this minor improvement, both Sher Ali's work and the revision carried out by the Editors are vitiated by the

garbling of the Quranic text in investing a Qadiyani biased, sectarian colour to such major articles of Islamic faith as the finality of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) as the Messenger and the Prophet Jesus's crucifixion. Regarding the former, it brazenly asserts: 'The door of Prophethood is not closed and Prophet Muhammad may be taken as *Khatumen Naibyyeen* (*sic*) in the sense of being the most exalted Messenger.' (p. 658) About the latter it relates the bizarre story that the Prophet Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him) 'went to an elevated region with running streams (Kashmir) after having escaped death on the cross' (p. 657)

The work is seriously flawed in denying most of the miracles cited in the Quran (pp. 648, 656-7, 673), in speaking of *Iblis* as the power of evil (p. 639), of *jinn* as inhabitants of alien regions and wild and savage people (p. 638), of Harut and Marut as the wise men of Babylon (p. 652), and in branding the joys of Paradise as mere symbols.

In sum, notwithstanding the revision, Sher Ali's work being a patently sectarian version should be approached with caution.

Publication details of the first edition:

Rabwah, Pakistan Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation, 1955, 812 pages.

Number of Editions: 13

Other Review:

Cragg, Kenneth, *The Holy Quran*, English Translation by Sher Ali, *Muslim World*, 47:4 (1957), 341-342.

95
Farid, Malik Ghulam
The Holy Quran with English Translation and Short Commentary
(1969)

Malik Ghulam Farid (1896-1977) was a prominent Qadyani activist, entrusted by Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad (1889-1965) son of the founder of Qadyanism, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1839-1908), to produce the English translation of the Quran. Farid was a member of the team, of which the other members were Sher Ali, Muhammad Aslam and Zafrulla Khan, that embarked on this project. Farid's main assignment was to render into English Mirza Bashiruddinn's commentary on the Quran, originally in Urdu.

The present work is actually an abridged version of the three-volumed *tafsir* authored by Mirza. This abridged Qadyani translation, has appeared only thrice, far behind the many editions of other Qadyani translators, namely Muhammad Ali, Sher Ali and Zafrulla Khan. This work expresses the views of "Hadrat Khalifatul Masih Second [Mirza Bashiruddin] as recorded in his speeches, sermons and lessons." (Foreword, p.1)

This is unmistakably a Qadiyani work, full of brazen interpolations in its Quran commentary. From the title page one learns that it is published under the auspices of Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, "fourth successor of the promised Messiah and Head of the Ahmadiyyah movement in Islam." The suggestion that it is a "movement in Islam" is disproven by the outrageous contents of this work which are discordant with the basic articles of Islamic faith.

The work exemplifies how the meaning of a Quranic verse may be twisted and distorted in a bid to link it somehow with peculiar Qadyani whims. Here are some examples:

i. The imaginary nexus between Surah al-Fatihah and "the Holy founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)" is stated in this bizarre way:

> The best known name of the Surah, however, is al-Fatihah. It is interesting to note that this very name occurs in a prophecy of the New Testament… Christian scholars saying that the prophecy refers to the second advent of Jesus Christ … The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, in whose person the prophecy relating to the second advent of Jesus has been fulfilled, wrote commentaries on this Surah and deduced arguments of the truth of his claim from its contents The prophecy referred to the fact that al-Fatihah would, for a time, remain, a closed book, but that a time would come when treasures of spiritual knowledge contained in it would be laid bare. This was done by Hadrat Ahmad. (pp. 1-2)

ii. The Quranic story about the Prophet Abraham (peace and blessings be upon him) taking four birds, cutting them into pieces and their return to him by Allah's leave (Surah Al-Baqarah 2: 261) is interpreted along these fantastic lines:

> This is a vision of Abraham. In "taking four birds" the implication was that his posterity would rise and fall four times… The second renaissance of Islam is being brought about by the Promised Messiah (i.e. Ghulam Ahmad). (p. 110)

iii. False words are ascribed to both the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and Quran scholars:

> Commentators of the Quran agree that, as stated in a saying of the Holy Prophet, the ultimate triumph of Islam will take place in the time of the Promised Messiah … The excellence of the ideal… has already begun to be increasingly recognized. (p. 403)

iv. Verse 18 of Surah Hud is invested with this meaning:

> Three arguments have been given in this verse in support of the holy prophet. His witness par excellence being the Promised Messiah, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. (p. 457)

v. A grossly tendentious reading of verse 56 of Surah al-Nur drives the Qadiyani translator to this conclusion:

The Prophet's *Khilafat* (successorship) will continue to exist in one form or another in the world till the end of time. Our age has witnessed his greatest spiritual *Khilafat* in the person of the Founder of Ahamadiyya Movement (p. 773).

vi. Regarding the import of verse 6 of Surah al-Sajdah the translator unabashedly asserts:

With the appearance of the Promised Messiah in the 14th century A.H., the process of decay has been arrested and renaissance of Islam has begun to take place. (p. 893)

vii. The Biblical prophecy about the Prophet Muhammad's advent, recounted in verse 7 of Surah al-Saff is given this sinister turn: od bus polodnid bara maled maybeğini

The prophecy mentioned in the verse applies to the Holy Prophet, but as a corollary it may also apply to the Promised Messiah, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, because he has also been called Ahmad in Divine Revelation and because also in this person the Second Manifestation or Second Advent of the Holy Prophet took place. To this second Manifestation of the Holy Prophet, the third verse of Surah al-Jumah pointedly refers. (p. 1208)

viii. Verse 24 of Surah al-Takwir is garbled in a brazen attempt to make the Quran and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) prophesize:

It may mean that the Holy Prophet saw himself in the distant East in the person of the Promised Messiah. (p. 1324)

ix. The translator audaciously fabricates other Quranic prophecies about Ghulam Ahmad:

The verses (17-18 of Surah al-Inshiqaq) contain a prophecy about the temporary decline of Muslims and their renaissance through the Great Deputy of the Holy Prophet the Promised Messiah. (p. 1336)

The "Promised Day" (verse 3 of Surah al-Buruj) may signify the day when the Promised Messiah will be raised. The Promised Day par excellence is the time of the Second Advent of the Holy Prophet in the person of his Deputy in the 14th Century A.H.

The Promised Messiah is also *Mashhud* (the witnessed one) in the sense that the Holy Prophet himself has borne witness to his truth. (p. 1339) The reference in the verse (2 of al-Tariq) may be to the Holy Prophet's Deputy… God will protect *al-Tariq* (the Morning Star) – the Holy Prophet's Deputy. (p. 1343).

Verse 4 of Surah al-Fajr may signify that whereas the Holy Prophet and the Promised Messiah were two separate individuals, the Promised Messiah was so completely lost in the Holy Prophet as to have become one with him. (p. 1353)

x. To crown it all, the work sites the paradisal graveyard in Qadyan, Ghulam Ahmad's birthplace and the headquarters of Qadyanism:

The establishment by the Promised Messiah, under a special Divine command, of a special graveyard at Qadian may be the physical fulfillment of the commandment embodied in verse 27 of Surah Ya Sin. (p. 947)

Even in the face of such obvious inventions, other despicable features of the work should not be disregarded. Throughout the work miracles stated in the Quranic are denied, e.g. the parting of the Red Sea (Al-Baqarah 2:51, p. 31), gushing forth of twelve springs with Prophet Moses's rod (Al-Baqarah 2:61, p. 34), the lifting of Mount Sinai (Al-Baqarah 2:64, p.36), the turning of transgressors into apes (Al-Baqarah 2:66, p. 37), the Prophet Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him) speaking from the cradle (Ali 'Imran 3:47, p. 138 and Maryam 19: 30, p. 650), the Prophet Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him) creating birds and reviving the dead by Allah's leave (Ali Imran 3:50, pp. 140-141), Allah lifting him up (Ali Imran 3:56, pp. 142-143 and al-Nisa 4:158, p. 232), the coming of angels (al-An'am 3:56, p. 319), turning of Prophet Moses's rod into a serpent (al-A'raf 7:108, p. 348), his hand turning into shining white (al-A'raf 7:109, p. 349 and Ta Ha 20:23, p. 667), the mountain breaking into pieces (al-A'raf 7:144, p. 356), Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) throwing dust in the battle of Badr (al-Anfal 8:18, p. 380), Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey (al-Isra 17:1, pp. 581-582), Gog and Magog (al-Kahf 18:85, p. 635), birds and mountains celebrating Allah's praise along with Prophet David (peace and blessings be upon him) (al-Anbiya

21:80, p. 703) Prophet Solomon's authority over winds and *jinn* (al-Anbiya 21:82-83, pp. 704), birds glorifying Allah (al-Nur 24:42, p. 769), Prophet Moses's experience in the burning bush (al-Naml 27:19-20, p. 820), the hoopoe talking to Prophet Solomon (peace and blessings be upon him) (al-Nami 27:21-22, pp. 821-822), the *jinn* listening to the Quran (al-Ahqaf 46:30, p. 1080), the resurrection of the dead at the blowing of the trumpet on the Last Day (al-Naba 78:19, p. 1305), and special birds routing Abrahah's army (al-Fil 105:4, p. 1403).

Furthermore, the work abounds in instances of pseudo-rational interpretation of things Quranic. Her are some gems:

a. Satan who beguiled Adam was one of the Adam's own people (p. 26)

b. Satan is any evil or harmful being or an animal or a disease or any other thing (p. 27).

c. The word "Shaytan" may also signify pangs of thirst (p. 378).

d. The "two angels" (Harut and Marut referred to in verse 103 of Al-Baqarah) signify two holy men. (p. 47)

e. The words, men and *jinn*, which occur in many verses of the Quran do not signify two different species of God's creatures, but two classes of human beings; "men" denoting the masses or the common folk, and "*jinn*" standing for the big people who often remain aloof from the common people and do not mix with them, practically remaining hidden from public gaze. (p. 307)

   The verse (129 of Surah al-An'am) provides another proof of the fact that by the word "jinn" here is meant only a class of human beings the great and the powerful. (p. 311)

f. The incident mentioned here (Allah asking the angels to prostrate before Adam in verse 12 of al-A'raf) is in no way connected with the first progenitor of the human race, who may be called the first Adam. It is only with the latter Adam (who dwelt in this earth about six thousand years ago) with whom the present account deals (p. 325).

g. "The cursed tree" (verse 61 of al-Isra) seems to be the Jewish people who have been repeatedly mentioned in the Quran as having been cursed by God (p. 595).

h. The Quranic account of the People of the Cave is interpreted along the following lines, which borders on sheer absurdity:

> The Muslims in the Holy Prophet's time were forewarned (through this story in verses 10-25 of *al-Kaby*) that Christian nations in the northern regions were lying in a state of dormancy but they would soon rise…
>
> Of bon The words, 'We shall cause them to turn over to the right and to the left' (verse 19) seem to refer to their (Christian nations) going about in the world, spreading in all directions in search of new markets and making new conquests.
>
> The words (about the dog in verse 19) refer to the great fondness of Western Christian nations for dogs.
>
> These words ('you would turn away from them in fright, and would be filled with awe of them') refer to the time when Christian nations of the West would acquire great political power. The verse contains a characteristic picture of the domination of Western nations over eastern and southern lands. European businessmen have a special knack for being gentle and courteous in their commercial dealings. To this characteristic of their the expression "And let him be courteous" (verse 20) seems to refer.
>
> The words "but let him not Inform anyone about you" (verse 120) refer to the quiet and unobtrusive penetration of the Western influence in the East. (pp. 615-616)

i. The other parable in verses 33:45 of al-Kahf is explained in a similar vein:

> This verse denotes that in their chequered history Christian nations would rise to great power twice. This first period preceded the advent of Islam while the second began with the dawn of the 17 Century AD when Christian nations of Europe began to make great progress and acquire unprecedented power and prestige which reached its zenith in the nineteenth century (p. 620)

j. Here is the elucidation of the story of Prophet Moses (peace and blessings be upon him) and Khidr (verse 80):

> The words "poor people" may represent "the Muslims" making a hole in the boat meant that Islam would exhort Muslims to spend their money in the cause of Allah (p. 631).

k. Gog and Magog (verse 95 of al-Kahf) are the USSR and the Western nations respectively. "The breaking of the wall" may mean the decline of the political power of Islam, particularly of the Turks in Europe (p. 637).

l. Al-Jibal (mountains) refer to the powerful Christian nations of the West. The prophecy in his verse (106 of Ta Ha) is in regard to their complete destruction. The decline of the West has already begun (p. 681).

The English translation of the Quranic text is in an archaic, obsolete idiom, which few readers can follow. Here is an instructive example:

> They said: Holy art Thou. No knowledge have we except what Thou has taught us. Surely Thou art the All-Knowing, the Wise (Al-Baqarah 2:33, p. 24).

In sum, the work is pitiable specimen of obnoxious Qadyanism that seeks to play havoc with the Quran.

Publication details of the first edition:

Rabwah, Pakistan, Oriental and Religious Publication Corporation, 1969, 1461 pages.

Number of Editions: 3

96
Khan, Muhammad Zafrulla
The Quran: The Eternal Revelation Vouchsafed to Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets
(1971)

In view of Zafrulla Khan's illustrious public life and his translation being "a crypto-Ahmadi"[56] work, it is of considerable importance. Born in Sialkot, Punjab, presently in Pakistan, he had his early education at American mission school and earned his higher degrees in law from King's College and Lincoln's Inn, London. On his return he was appointed a member of Viceroy's council in the British India, which enhanced further his credentials as a leading pubic figure. After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, he took over as its first Foreign Affairs Minister. In 1962 he was elected President, UN General Assembly. As Qadyanis were declared as non-Muslims in view of their deviant faith and practices, he felt so outraged that he left Pakistan for good and spent the rest of his life at Putney, the Qadyani headquarters in the UK. During this period he authored a number of books, including his translation of and commentary on the Quran, which bear a markedly Qadyani slant het beds aitas garwoliat

It is a typical Qadyani translation, though its deceptive title *The Quran: The Eternal Revelation vouchsafed to Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets* aims at giving this false impression to readers that its author believes in Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the Final Messenger of Allah. With a similar design to misleading unsuspecting readers, both Muslims and non-Muslims, the author is hailed on the flap jacket of the work as a champion of the cause and interests of Pakistan at the UN and other international bodies. His expertise in Islamic Studies and Arabic is also overblown with

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[56] Neal Robinson, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Quran," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8:3 (1997), 265.

a view to winning readers over to Qadyanism, which this work unabashedly promotes.

His twisted translation of Verse 157 of Surah al-Nisa seeks to press ress home the point, emanating from his Qadyani faith that Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was crucified by the Jews at the cross but thanks to divine intervention he did not die at the cross. Rather, he went all the way to Kashmir, India, died there and lies buried there. Neal Robinson demonstrates how Khan has invested his rendering of the above verse with the Qadyani beliefs:

> There is nothing in the Arabic corresponding to 'like one crucified at death,' 'in the matter of his having been taken down alive from the cross,' 'in the manner they allege' and that 'Jesus died on the cross.' Moreover, *wa-ma salabubu*, which means 'they did not crucify him' is implausibly rendered 'nore did they compass his death on the cross'…[57]

Robinson adduces another blatant example of Khan's tampering with the meaning of the Quranic text (Veres 72-73 of Al-Baqarah) in order to make it compatible with the Qadyani dogma:

The Ahmadiya link this passage [Verses 157-158] of al-Nisal with Q. 2: 71f, which orthodox Muslims have traditionally interpreted as a reference to how God miraculously brought a murderd man to life in Moses' time by instructing the Children of Israel to smite his corpse with part of a sacrificed Cow.

Zafrulla Khan, following earlier Ahmadi translators, construes the passage as referring to the crucifixion…

> There is no justification for translating *qataltum* as 'claimed to have brought about the death of,' *yubui* as 'plan to preserve alive,' al-mawta as 'those considered dead.' The verb *daraba* can have other meanings besides 'strike,' but to translate *idribubu bi-ba'diba* as "Test the crucial question by putting together other incidents relating to the affair" is fanciful.[58]

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57 Ibid., 266.

58 Ibid., 266.

Other glaring instances of his mistranslation are Verses 55 of Surah Ghafir and 7 of al-Duha.

Notwithstanding the high profile enjoyed by Khan in the international arena, his translation did not gain any currency even in the West. Published first in 1971 by two leading Western publishers simultaneously from both the US and UK, only nine editions of his work have appeared in the last thirty years. The last four came out only in 1990s as part of the aggressive Qadyani missionary activity. Equally stange it is that no review appeared on his work notwithstanding his reputation.

Publication details of the first edition:

London, Curzon Press, 1971. 673 pages. ISBN:07007-0000-5.

Number of Editions: 9

97

Omar, Amatul Rahman and Omar, Abdul Mannan

The Holy Quran: Arabic Text and English Translation

(2005)

The work under review represents another Qadyani English translation of the Quran by Hakim Nooruddin (1841-1914) who took over as the head of Qadyanis after Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's death. Oth er Qadyani ventures in the field include those of Muhammad Ali (1917), Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud (1947), Sher Ali (1955), Malik Ghulam Farid (1969) and Zafrulla Khan (1971). More curiously it is an English version of the original in Urdu. The Urdu original was, however, never published: Nooruddin's handwritten notes have been edited and translated into English mainly by his daughter-in-law, Amatul Rahman, who happens to be the daughter of another Qadyani English translator of the Quran, Sher Ali. Thus the Qadyani origins of this work are too strong to be ignored. However, the editors have taken every care of cover up the Qadyani credentials of the author, the translators and the editors. Rather, in order to mislead unsuspecting readers, Nooruddin is paraded as 'a scholar and teacher of the Holy Quran with international fame and recognition.'

Notwithstanding the editors' craftiness in suppressing their Qadyani antecedents, their work betrays all the trappings of Qadyanism- outright rejection of miracles and the existence of angels, jinn and the joys of Paradise. Reflective of this are the following bizarre assertions in the work, which run contrary to the basic articles of Islamic faith:

(a) Adam was not the first man and the humankind existed even before him… (p. 18)

(b) *Hur* (houris) signify 'the righteous among the women of the humankind. The term applies to the righteous of both the sexes. (p. 26B)

(c) The word angels as applied to them [Harut and Marut] is figurative. It means holy and good; men of knowledge, wisdom and power. (p. 27B)

(d) The description of Paradise as given in the Holy Quran is a parable. The streams of paradise represent good deeds, and gardens represent faith, (p. 37B)

(e) Jinn applies to various germs and insects… people of different, far-flung countries living detached from other civilized human beings… the Holy Quran clears that jinn and human beings are not two different kind of beings. (p. 38B). Jinn are fiery natured, haughty people. (p. 724)

In view of such gross misrepresentations, this work should be approached with caution.

As to the translation itself, it does not have any distinctive feature to comment on. The translators have faithfully conveyed Nooruddin's original Urdu translation which is no more than an ordinary attempt to state in a banal way the message of the Quran. The only noteworthy feature is the sustained effort on the part of the translator and editors is to invest the Quranic message with the beliefs peculiar to Qadyanis.

Publication details of the first edition:

Hockessin, DE, USA, Noor Foundation International, 2005. 724 pages, ISBN: 0-9632064-3-7

Number of Editions: 2

PART – V
BY ORIENTALISTS

98
Ross, Alexander
The Alcoran of Mahomet, Translated Out of Arabic for the Satisfaction of All That Desire to Looking into Turkish Vanities
(1649)

Alexander Ross was a leading public figure of his day and enjoyed fame as a polemical writer, man of letters, historian and chaplain of King Charles 1. Born in Aberdeen, Scotland, he was a student of divinity and philosophy. His interest in Turkey and Islam, which he dubs as "Turkish" religion, grew as a result of the increasing diplomatic, trade and travel links between Britain and the Ottoman empire, the latter being the superpower of the day. A few days before its publication, his translation of the Quran, which happens to be the first one in English, the Council of State, England banned its publication on 2 March 1649, fearing that "the Quran, backed by the powerful empire of the Ottomans might... implant itself in English society." In order to allay this apprehension Ross added to his work two prefatory notes: "A summary of the Religion of the Turks, and The translator to the Christian Reader." Both of these assert that the "Turkish" religion being a mere heresy "could not shake Christian faith." In pursuance of the same objective he appended to his work, even after it had been printed, two more pieces: "A Needful caveat or Admonition for them who desire to know what use may be made of, or if there be danger in reading the Alcoran," and "The Life and Death of Mahomet." The polemical intent of the former is evident from its title. As to the latter, it is downright abusive, teeming with imaginary scandalous stories and calumny directed against the Prophet (peace be upon him). His other works on history too, betray his anti-Islam bigotry.

His poor understanding and distortion of things Islamic come out even in the title of his translation: "*The Alcoran of Mahomet*,

Translated out of Arabic for the satisfaction of all that desire to looking into *Turkish vanities*." (italics mine). Not only its patently polemical, some of its other features are equally odd.

First, contrary to its claim, it is not a translation from Arabic. Rather, it is a poor English version of Sieur Du Ryer's French translation of the Quran which had appeared in 1647. This French translation, as Henry Stubbe observes "is very corrupt, altering and omitting many passages.[59]

Among all the English translators of the Quran, Ross alone has perhaps the unenviable, rather unimaginable distinction of being a translator of the Quran, who did not know any Arabic. Sale, Stubbe and Zwemer are among several Orientalists who testify to Ross's lack of knowledge of Arabic. Sale's comment is highly instructive:

> Ross's English version is no other than a translation of Du Ryer's, and that a very bad one; for Alexander Ross who did it, being utterly unacquainted with Arabic, and no great master of the French, has added a number of fresh mistakes of his own to those of Du Ryer, not to mention the meanness of his language, which would make a better book look ridiculous.[60]

Nabil Matar elaborates the above point further:

> Ross did not know Arabic and relied completely on the French translation by Andrew Du Ryer... He translated word for word from the French.[61]

Owing to his total unfamiliarity with Arabic and Islamic texts, Ross does not cite even a single Muslim source in his notes on the Quran. Worse, he attributes to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) such statements which he never made. Until the publication of George Sale's translation in 1734, i.e. for more than a century,

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59 Henry Stubbe, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism with the Life of Mahomet*, ed. Hafiz Mahmud Khan Shirani. Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1954-1959.

60 George Sale, *The Koran*. London, Fredreick Warne, 1734. vii.

61 Nabil Matar, "Alexander Ross and the First English Translation of the Quran," *Muslim World* 88:1 (January 1998), 82 and 85.

however, this extremely defective translation served as the main source of the study of the Quran and Islam in English.

Notwithstanding its markedly polemical tenor, it stands out as the first English translation, which paved the way for the study of the Quran in England on a wider scale in the years to come. Though it was eclipsed by Sale's translation, it was reprinted at regular intervals in the US in the nineteenth century. Since 1948, however, it has not been re-issued.

Ross's work is a telling example of all the characteristics of an Orientalist writing on Islam - sheer hostility and bigotry towards all things Islamic which Muslims regard as sacred; polemical/missionary motive behind the writing; shockingly insufficient knowledge of Islamic texts and serving the sole objective of misguiding and prejudicing readers against Islam. The narrowness of Ross's stance is betrayed by his labelling Islam as a "Turkish" religion. His audacity in having translated the Quran without possessing any knowledge of Arabic is outrageous.

Publication details of the first edition:

London, 1649. 408 pages

99
Sale, George
The Koran, Commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammad
(1734)

George Sale, the son of a London merchant, studied law and Arabic. In view of his mastery over Arabic, the society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), London, selected him as a member of the team entrusted with the job of producing the Arabic translation of the New Testament for promoting Christianity among the Arabic- speaking people. Prompted by his own interest in the Quran and by his close association with the SPCK, Sale decided to undertake the English translation of the Quran. He was aware of the deficiencies in the European translations of the Quran. However, his main motive behind his venture was polemical; as is evident from his own statement of intent:

> I imagine it almost needless either to make an apology for publishing the following translation, or to go about to prove it is a work of use as well as curiosity… it is absolutely necessary to undeceive those who, from the ignorant or unfair translations which have appeared, have entertained too favourable an opinion of the original, and also to enable us effectually to expose the imposture… For the Koran being so manifest a forgery!
>
> The Protestants alone are able to attack the Koran with success, and for them I think Providence has reserved the glory of its overthrow.[62]

Not content with even this, he offers detailed instructions to Christian missionaries as to how they should convert Muslims to Christian faith.

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62 George Sale, "To the Reader" in *The Koran*. London, J. Wilcox, 1734, iv.

Unlike his predecessors in the field, Alexander Ross, Sale was conversant with both the Arabic language and tafsir corpus. Yet his translation suffers from every conceivable type of defect- omissions, mistranslations and interpolation of extraneous material into the body of the translation. In his brilliant critique, Ghulam Sarwar identifies numerous instances of the unpardonable liberties taken by Sale:

> Just as Sale distorts the meaning of the Holy Quran by substitution of "O Men of Mecca" for the general expression "O men" or "O mankind" in the same he puts in (v. 143, ch. 2) "You O Arabians," whereas God means "Ye" (Muslims). The words "O Arabians" or "of Mecca" are not in the next but Sale's interpolations.
>
> In verse, 191, chapter2 "And persecution in faith is worse than war," is rendered by Sale, "For temptation to idolatry is more grievous than slaughter." The interpolation of the words "to idolatry" being intended by Sale to insinuate the intolerance of Islam to other religions.
>
> In verse 12, chapter 5, "And sent forward to God a goodly sending," is rendered by Sale, And lend unto God on good usury. This is simply ridiculous.
>
> In v. 43, ch.15, fourteen words of the original have been enlarged into forty- seven in the translation.
>
> Let all the readers of the Holy Quran be aware of Sale's forgeries. The following is a most willful mistranslation of Sale's (ch. 22, v.52): "We have sent no prophet before thee, but when he read, Satan suggested some error in his reading." All Christian writers have harped upon this verse and the fancied occasion on which it is said to have been revealed, … the translation given above is entirely wrong, for the words "read" and "reading" are not in the original text.[63]

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63 Ghulam Sarwar, "A Review of the Previous Translations of the Holy Quran," in is *Translation of the Holy Quran*, Karachi, Pakistan, National Book Foundation, 1973, xi, xii, xv and xvii.

Sale is guilty also of having mistranslated al-ghayb as "mysteries of faith" and bi ism Allah al- Rahman al- Raheem as "In the name of the most merciful God." In the latter instance he tends to take al-Rahman and al-Raheem as perfect synonymous and lumps the two together under his loose rendering, "the most merciful." Throughout his Preliminary Discourse and his explanatory notes he aims at pressing home that the Quranic text is imperfect and that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) erred in composing it.

Mohar Ali, a leading Islamic scholar, passes the following judgement on Sale's work on the basis of his thorough, critical analysis:

> Sale reproduced all the faults and mistakes of Marracci [the Latin translator of the Quran in 1698] in his translation and notes; and as the intention was to overthrow the Quran, Sale spared no means to distort its meaning. The distortion was done in a number of ways, mainly, (a) paraphrasing; (b) deliberate mistranslation and also mistranslation due to (i) omission of words or expressions in the text from the meaning, (ii) lack of understanding of the correct meaning of some Arabic expressions, (iii) the use of Christian theological terms and concepts, (iv) and interpolation of words and expressions extraneous to the text and (c)faultry notes and comments. The whole work is replete with these faults.[64]

Regrettably, despite these serious defects in both the conception and execution of Sale's translation, it had phenomenal reception in the West. Its more than 160 editions make it as the most popular and oft-printed English translation in both the UK and US. Its 67 American editions have set a record in publication history. Almost every library in the West has its copy on the shelf. Only after 1950s has its popularity declined, as it was replaced by N.J. Dawood's and A.J. Arberry's translation was rendered into some European languages, for example, by Theodere Arnold into German in 1746, by Kalmkov into Russian in 1792 and by Litza in Bulgarian in 1902.

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[64] M. Mohar Ali, *The Quran and the Orientalists*, Norwich, UK, Jamiyat Ihyaa Minhaj al- Sunnah, 2004, 332.

In sum, Sale appears as a Christian missionary polemicist and Orientalist in the light of his pronouncements on Islam, the Prophet and the Quran. His avowed aim was to expose the "imposture" of the Prophet, the "forgeries" of the Quran and "to attack [Islam] with success" in order to attain" the glory of its overthrow.

Publication details of the first editions:

London, J. Wilcox, 1734, 187+508 pages

Number of Editions: Around 170

Other Reviews:

- Swan, George "Review on Sale's The Koran" *Muslim World 20:2* (April 1930), 208.
- Shellabear, G. W. "Is Sale's Koran Reliable?" *Muslim World 21* (1931).126-142.
- Sarwar, Ghulam "A Review of the Previous Translations of the Holy Quran," in his Translation of the Holy Quran Karachi, Pakistan National Book Foundation, 1973. Vii-xxii.

100
Rodwell, J.M.
The Koran, The Suras Arranged in Chronological Order with Notes
(1861)

John Meadows Rodwell studied at the University of Cambridge and later served as the Recotr, St. Ethelberga, London. He embarked upon the translation of the Quran partly owing to his motives as an Orientalist bent on discrediting Islam and partly on account of his dissatisfaction with Sale's translation. He states as to why he undertook this exercise:

> A line of argument to be adopted by a Christian missionary in dealing with a Muhammadan should be, not to attack Islam as a mass of error, but to show that it contains fragments of disjointed truth – that is based upon Christianity and Judaism partially understood – especially upon the latter, without any appreciation of its typical character pointing to Christianity as a final dispensation. [1]

While taking the cue from the studies carried out by Orientalists such as Gustav Weil and Theodore Noeldeke on the chronology of the Quran, Rodwell attempts, in his translation, at the rearrangement of Quranic Surahs in the chronological order. So doing, he disregards altogether the reports which consistently record the received Surah order as devised by the Prophet (peace be upon him) under divine instruction, the Muslim sensitivities on the subject and the inner contradictions in and the flawed logic of his insistence on chronological sequencing. Ghulam Sarwar raises some pertinent and challenging questions about Rodwell's methodology:

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[1] J.M. Rodewll, The Koran, Translated from the Arabic, the Suras arranged in chronological order with notes. London, Williams and Norgate, 1861, Preface, xxv.

> … What is the use of arranging the suras in a chronological order, when part of the contents of one Surah which follows another preceded part of the contents of that which has gone before? From the very first chapter Rodwell is and such chapter belong to a later or an earlier period. This fact reduces his chronological order to an absurdity. Moreover, there is no agreement amongst scholars as to the chronological order of suras.[2]

Driven by his enthusiasm for chronological order he places Surah al-Alaq (96at the beginning of the Quranic text, designating it as the first Surah. Howeve only Verse 1-5 of this Surah were revealed as the Prophet (peace be upon him) had commenced his mission while Verses 6-19 of the same Surah were sent down at a much later date. Rodwell himself concedes the same point while commenting on Verse 6: "This and the following verse may have been added at a later period." It is on record that many verses and even complete Surahs had been received by the Prophet (peace be upon him) before Verses 6-19 of Surah al-Alaq were sent down to by him. Given this, a rearrangement of Surahs, in defiance of the received Surah order, which contain verses dating to various periods, is no more than a pointless exercise which does not serve any useful purpose. However, Rodwell insisted on this project and produced his version which disrupts the traditional Surah order which has been consistently followed from the early years to his day.

M. Mohar Ali identifies Rodwell's following motives behind his insistence on the rearrangement of the Quranic text:

> The obvious purpose was to give a confused view about the Quran and to show that it consisted only of fragments of disjointed truth derived from Judaism and Christianity. Another intention was to prove that Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, was its author.[3]

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2 Ghulam Sarwar, "A Review of the Previous Translations of the Holy Quran" in his Translation of the Holy Quran. Karachi, Pakistan, National Book Foundation, 1973 xxiii.

3 M. Mohar Ali, The Quran and the Orientalists. Norwich, UK, jamiat Ihyaa Minhaaj al Sunnah, 2004, 337.

Apart from playing havoc with the arrangement of the Quranic text Rodwell's is unsparing in his efforts to create doubts about the authenticity and veracity of the Quranic text. His comments on the opening verses of Surah al – Rum are reflective of his malicious intent:

> The Muhammadans appeal to this passage (Verses 1-6 of Surah al Rum) as a clear proof of the inspiration of their Prophet. But it should be borne in mind that the vowel points of the consonants of the Arabic word defeated in verse 1, not being originally written, and depending entirely on the speaker or reader, would make the prophecy true in either event, according as the verb received an active or passive sense in pronunciation. The whole passage was probably constructed with the view of its proving true in any event.[4]

Ghulam Sarwar lays bare the sheer absurdity of Rodwell's malicious argument thus:

> …let us put the verb "defeated"… in the active instead of the passive form. The translation would then read (adopting Rodwell's own rendering):
>
> The Greeks have defeated.
>
> In a land hard by: But after their defeat they shall defeat their foes.
>
> This makes nonsense, the object of the verb defeat in the first verse would be left out. And "after their defeat" would have to be changed to "after their victory," and into "they shall be defeated by their foes."[5]

Rodwell's translation was highly popular in the West until the appearance of Dawood's and Arberry's in 1950s. More than 50 editions of his work are found in most of the libraries in the West.

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4 J.M. Rodwell, op. cit., 127.

5 Ghulam Sarwar, op. cit., xxvi

All the trappings peculiar to the Orientalist/missionary mindset are to the fore in Rodwell's work. He speaks of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as "the crafty author" of the Quran, constantly alludes to the Christian and Jewish influence on the Quran and hurls all sorts of allegations against the Prophet (peace be upon him). He is guilty of not only mistranslation, but also of spewing out malice and calumny. For example, while commenting on the use of the expression abd (slave) in the Quran, he mischievously remarks that it was an appropriate form of address in that only some slaves had accepted Islam.

Publication details of the first edition

London, William and Norgate, 1861. 659 pages

Number of editions: 51

Other Review:

Sarwar, Ghulam "A Review of the Previous Translations of the Holy Quran" in his *Translation of the Holy Quran*. Karachi, Pakistan National Book Foundation, 1973. Xxi-xxvii.

101
Palmer, E.H.
The Quran
(1880)

Born in 1840 in Cambridge. E.H. Palmer came into contact with Sayid Abdullah, a teacher of Urdu at the University of Cambridge. At the latter's behest he studied Oriental languages. Later, he worked as the cataloguer of Arabic, Persian and Urdu manuscripts at King's College and Trinity College, University of Cambridge. He was elevated as Fellow, St. John's College. Apart from the Quran, he translated into English the poetical works of the Egyptian writer, Baha al-Din Zuhair. He visited Egypt in 1882 reportedly on a secret service mission and was murdered there on 11 August 1882.

In view of Palmer's Orientalist credentials, Max Muller entrusted him with the assignment of translating the Quran into English, as part of his grand, multi-volumed enterprise, The Sacred Books of the East series. Palmer's translation was published as volumes 6 and 9 of this series from Oxford, with an introduction by R.A. Nicholson.

As a typical Orientalist, Palmer seeks to discredit the Quran, alleging that its language "is not elegant in the sense of literary refinement."[1] Both A.R. Nykl and Ghulam Sarwar who have critically analysed his translation point to its numerous mistakes. In his article published in a scholarly American journal, Nykl identifies as many as 70 bewildering mistakes of omission and mistranslation on Palmer's part.[2] Nykl states:

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1 E.H. Palmer, The Quran. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1880, p.1xxvi.

2 A.R. Nykl, "Notes on Palmer's The Quran," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 56 (1976), 77-84

> In preparing for the printer my translation of the Quran into Czech I had occasion to check up on a number of translations into other languages, and was rather surprised to discover a considerable number of serious mistakes and oversight in E.H. Palmer's translation (Oxford, 1880, 1900). These may have already been noticed by others, but have not been corrected in two reprints… Professor R.A. Nicholson tells me that, though asked to write an Introduction, he was not requested to correct the mistakes in the text.[3]

Nykl's inventory of Palmer's mistakes should be read in conjunction with Ghulam Sarwar's critique on this work, as he too, draws attention to many more instances of his glaring mistakes:

> Palmer says he translates the Holy Quran literally, yet hundreds of vow's (and), fas (so that, then, therefore or but), uncountable number of definite and indefinite articles and all the other little aids to clarity of language and smoothness of style are ignored in his translation.
>
> The work seems to have been done with such haste and hurry that it is almost beyond my power to narrate its defects. Sale and Rodwell are not perfect either, but Palmer had not decency to treat the original with the respect due to it. In the chapter (16) called "The Bee" (Palmer, vol.1 p. 259) a whole verse is left out… In verse 46, chapter 29, the words "say ye" (Muslims) in the imperative mood of the original have been translated as "who say" (meaning the Christians and Jews say). The sense, of course, is entirely changed.
>
> Palmer either did not know enough classical Arabic, or having known it, abused its idiom to his heart's content.
>
> His verse (vol. ii, ch.38, verse 29, p.178) reads: "And we gave to David, Solomon, an excellent servant; verily he turned frequently to us."
>
> The reader will see that it is impossible to say whom the he above refers to, whether to David, Solomon, or servant. It is not also clear as to who was the excellent servant and what was given to

[3] Ibid… p.77

> David, or whether what was given to David or to Solomon or to both.
>
> It [Palmer's] is the most uneven of all translations of the Holy Quran I know of. It jars and jolts the scholar, and is not always to be accepted without careful discrimination.[4]

On Palmer's inadequate familiarity with Arabic and his inelegant translation, M. Mohar Ali makes this insightful observation:

> Palmer failed to grasp the meaning of many an Arabic idiom or purposely misconstrued it to show the supposed rudeness of the language. For instance he translates 2: 273 as: "The poor who are straitened in God's way and cannot knock about the earth" of the Arabic idiom by a note in remarks in the Introduction that the language of the Quran is really rude and rugged, and although the expression is only because all literary Arabic has been modeled on the style of the Quran." Thus, in order to prove the supposed rudeness of the language of the Quran Palmer casts aspersion on the Arabic language as a whole and makes the language of his translation inelegant and rude.[5]

Notwithstanding Palmer's famed mastery over Oriental languages and the publication of his translation as part of a prestigious series of works on the Orient, his work did not win any acclaim or popularity. During the last fifty years only eleven editions of his work have been issued, including six from India.

Palmer's translation is to be approached with utmost caution in view of his scant regard for the Quranic text. His carelessness in wholly indefensible. The numerous mistakes of omission plaguing his work render it as of little value.

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4 Ghulam Sarwar. "A Review of the Previous Translation of the Holy Quran" in his Translation of the Holy Quran. Karachi, Pakistan, National Book Foundation, 1973, xxvii, xxix, xxxiii, and xxxv.

5 M. Mohar Ali, The Quran and the Orientalists. Norwich, UK, Jamiyat Ihyaa Minhaaj al –Sunnah, 2004, p. 341.

Publication details of the first edition:

The Quran, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1880. 2 Vols. Vol. 1: 268 pages and Vol. 2: 362 pages.

Number of Editions: 23

Other Reviews:

Author not stated, "Review on Palmer's *The Koran" Muslim World* 19 (1929), 423.

Nykl, A.R., "Notes on Palmer's *The Quran" Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 56 (1936), 77 – 84.

102
Bell, Richard
The Quran: Translated with a Critical Rearrangement of the Surahs
(1937-1939)

Born in Scotland, Richard Bell studied in both England and Germany. For years he served as Minister at Wamphary, a country parish. He then returned to University of Edinburgh for higher studies. Soon, he gained fame as a scholar of both Christian theology and Islamic Studies and obtained the degree of the doctor of divinity. He had a long stint of teaching Arabic at the University of Edinburgh. In his first major work, The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment (London, Frank Cass, 1926), he speculates how Christianity influenced Islam in formative years. In his other influential work Introduction to the its Quran (Edinburgh, Ediburgh University Press, 1953), as pointed out by Arthur Jeffery, Bell deals with

> various schemes that have been suggested for arranging the material of the Quran chronologically, his bringing out of Muhammad's changing conceptions as to the reality or non-reality of false gods, and his discussion of the sources from which the Prophet drew much of his material. In this latter matter he is careful to note the uncertainty there must always be as to whether particular items came from a Jewish or a Christian source, and even more careful to draw attention to the way in which Muhammad moulded and adapted this borrowed material for his purposes.[1]

Apart from his conviction as an Orientalist about the Quran being the product of Prophet Muhammad's mind, as is borne out by the above passage, Bell held strongly another outrageous view that the

[1] Arthur Jeffery, "Review on Introduction to the Quran," Muslim World 44: 3 – 4 (1954), 255.

Quranic text needed to be reconstructed afresh. He refused to accept Quranic Surahs as complete units, insisting that these had been pieced together from a huge mass of relatively short revelations. Therefore, he undertook the task of rearranging "Muhammad's utterances" in accordance with the chronology of the Prophet's career. This rearrangement of the Quranic text by Bell while acting as the self-appointed editor is hailed by John E. Merrill, another Orientalist, as the distinctive feature of Bell's work, as he explains some of the presuppositions on which Bell's rearrangement rests:

> ...when the redactors undertook the task [of compiling the Quran], they found themselves faced by voluminous and more or less confused transcripts of the deliverances of Muhammad.
>
> With this chronological reconstruction as a background, Dr Bell classifies the literary activities of Muhammad as belonging to three periods:
>
> 1) A 'Sign' period, which was purely Meccan. Literary remains from this period are "scrappy." Their distinguishing characteristic is 'sign' passages.
> 2) A 'Quran' period, partly Meccan, and partly Medina up to the change of qiblah. Muhammad was giving to the Arabs in their own language the stories current among Jews and Christians, and most of the narratives of former people and prophets belong here.
> 3) A 'Book' period after the change in qiblah, and the declaration of the establishment of an independent religious community. The purpose now was to prepare for the new community a new 'Book,' which should be to the Muslims what in Muhammad's thought the Law was to the Jews and the Gospel to the Christians.
>
> Two different words may be ward for the same Idea in successive passages, as in furah 2.54 and 34, where the name "Iblis is used in the fint case, and "Satan" in the second. The inference drawn is that this change in name indicates the presence of two different sources.

> Dr. Bell's solution presupposed not only that the original units of Muhammad's utterances were short deliverances, but also that in the combination of these units in the present surahs many misplacements occurred, and misplacements are the main cause of the existing incoherence. He accounts for the misplacements by the theory that Muhammad's original brief deliverances were recorded on the different and loose writing materials at his disposal, often on mere bits of such material, often on materials already used in part. The possibilities of disorder not to say confusion, become at once unlimited... And there is the further possibility of stray verses, not meant for publication, discarded, meant for Muhammad alone.[2]

Out of his zeal for the reconstruction of the Quran, Bell speaks of numerous instances of "misplacements, alterations, substitutions and derangements" in the Quranic text. For mere "unconnected scraps" which have mistakenly found their way into the copy of the Quran: Verse 209 represents a later "addition" whereas Verse 210 is no more than a "continuation" of Verse 205. This preposterous exercise is condemned by even a fellow Orientalist thus:

> I confess that his (Bell's) surgery is so devastating I cannot use his translation. By cutting out verses and transposing them for purely subjective reasons and by going on to amputate half the verses and even phrases he provokes a mental resistance to textual analysis... At the best readers will say: "this is how Bell thinks the Quran originally ran"; at the worst: "the man has lost all sense of proportion." [3]

Despite his impeccable credentials as an Orientalist, Bell's translation evoked only a lukewarm response, a point borne out by the appearance of only 7 editions during sixty years of its publication history.

Bell is known more fore his surgical approach to the sacro sanct Quranic text, reather than for his competence as a translator and

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2 J. E. Merril, "Dr Bell's Critical Analysis of the Quran," Muslim World 37: 2 (1947), 136, 139,142 – 143 and 145.

3 Alfred Guillaume, "Review on the Koran Interpreted" Muslim World 47: 1 (1957), 248.

scholar of the Quran. He tried to apply the principles of biblical criticism to the Quran. His "critical rearrangement" of the Quran is reflective of his typical Orientalist mindset- denying the divine origin of the Quran, attributing its authorship to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), speculating on its Judaeo – Christian borrowings and their influence, finding fault with the arrangement of the Quranic text and contesting the authenticity and purity of the Quran.

Publication details of the first edition:

Edinburgh, UK, T and T Clark, 1937 – 1939, 2 Volumes. Vol. 1: 343 pages and Vol. 2: 354 pages.

Number of Editions: 7

Other Reviews:

- Faris, N.A. "Review on Richard Bell's Translation of the Quran," The Muslim World 28: 4 (1938) 409.
- Merril, J.E. "Dr. Bell's Critical Analysis of the Quran," Muslim World 37: 2 (1947), 134 – 148.
- Vahiduddin, S. "Richard Bell's Study of the Quran: A Critical Analysis," Islamic Culture 30 (1956), 263 – 272.
- Manzoor, Parvez S. "Method Against Truth: Orientalism and Quranic Studies," Muslim World Book Review 7: 4 (1987), especially 35-36.

103
Arberry, A.J.
The Koran Interpreted
(1955)

Since its publication in 1955, the renowned British Orientalist, Arthur J. Arberry's translation of the Quran, The Koran Interpreted has enjoyed immense popularity. It has been reprinted around 30times. Its handy World Classic edition brought out by the Oxford University Press is available in almost every Western library and bookstore. The wide acclaim this translation has won may be attributed, in large measure, to Arberry's impeccable credentials as a scholar of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Arberry Cairo University, Egypt and later as Professor of Arabic and Persian at the Universities of London and Cambridge. During his stay in Egypt, the gained thorough familiarity with Muslim culture, including literature. Illustrative of it are his excellent translations of dozens of Arabic, Persian and Urdu literary masterpieces.[1],[2] However, what makes him stand out above other Orientalist, both his predecessors and contemporaries, is that his works are free, to a great extent, from the errors of perspective common among other Orientalist. For example in a sharp contrast to other Orientalist English translators of the Quran, ranging from Alexander Ross (1649) to Richard Bell (1937), in the Preface to his translation, he at least, faithfully records the Muslim belief about the divine origin of the Quran. Moreover, unlike others, he does not harp on the so-

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1 Of Arberry's spate of translations the following deserve mention in particular: Arabic: Attar's Tadhkirat al- Auliya; Al- Niffari's Mawaqif and Mukhatabat; Ibn al-Farid's Mystical Poems; The Seven Odes; Al-Sarraj's Kitab al-Luma; Al- Mutanabbi's Poems.

Persian: Translations of the poems of Rumi, Hafiz and Umar Khayyam.

Urdu: Poetical works of Iqbal.

2 A.J. Arberry, The Koran Interpreted, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1980. 2 Volumes. 1, 25. All subsequent references are to this edition.

called sources of the Quran or it being the product of the Prophet's mind. On the contrary, he is seen severely criticizing his predecessors, namely, Ross, Sale, Rodwell and Bell for the lack of scholarly impartiality in their approach to the Quran. He illustrates, in particular, how Bell, as a representative of Higher Criticism, threw himself "with brisk enthusiasm into the task of demolishing the Koran."[1] Far from others who see little merit in the form or contents of the Quran, he pays glowing homage to "the rhetorical and rhythmical patterns which are the glory and sublimity of the Koran."[2]

Yet these valuable elements should not blind one to some serious incongruities in his work which appear all the more odd in view of his enviable command over Arabic. There are instances of omission and mistranslation too, to which we would revert later in this piece. First, loet us begin with some inexplicable and intriguing aspects of his work:

- His thirty – one pages long Preface does not say a word about the contents or message of the Quran. Although he produced this work specifically for the Western, non-Muslim readers, it never occurs to him to introduce the Quran to them. Being new to the Quran his target readership needed all the more some guidance on the subject matter, themes and impact of the Quran. This gap appears more marked because his work does not have even a single explanatory note. It consists only of the translation of the text and a short Index, bereft of any back ground material on the Quranic personalities, allusions, and historical events. Without any commentary or authorial notes, a translation alone cannot and does not advance the understanding of the Quran, especially of those studying it for the first time.
- Equally hard to justify is his use of archaic, outdated expressions of the King James Bible in a work published in

1 Ibid., 2, 10.

2 Ibid., 1, 25.

1955. His readers must have found these expressions mostly incomprehensive. The preponderance of such obsolete words comes out sharply in the following instances:

Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for succor

Guide us on the straight path,

The path of those who Thou hast blessed,

Not of those against whom Thou art wrathful,

Nor of those who are astray.[1]

Here is another passage littered with unintelligible words:

My Lord, hast Thou willed

Thou wouldst have destroyed them before, and me.

Wilt Thou destroy us for what the foolish ones

Of us have done? It is only Thy trial whereby

Thou leadest astray whom Thou wilt, and guidest

Whom Thou wilt. Thou art our Protector.[2]

- Nowhere in his work has Arberry mentioned the Arabic Surah titles; these appear only in their English version. At places, he employs highly unusual ones:

Surah 30 al –Rum as the Greeks

Surah 07 al – A'raf as the Battlement

Surah 35 Fatir as the Angels

Surah 25 al – Furqan as Salvation

Surah 56 al – Waqi'ah at The Terror

Both the Surahs 23 and 40, al – Muminun and al – Mumin respectively are assigned the same title "The Believes"

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1 Ibid., 1, 29.

2 Ibid., 1, 189.

- As already indicated, Arberry's works is without any explanatory note as a result, one gets no idea about his mindset regarding Quranic. Only the Index to his work provides some clues about his approach which is, in several instances, flawed. The Quran relates at length Prophet Abraham's quest for truth, stating how he discarded one after another such objects of nature as the sun, the moon and stars as unworthy of the Lordship. In the Index, however, this episode is branded as "Abraham's conversion."[1] This description does not do justice to the import of the Quran. According to the Quran, after man's creation. Allah directed the angels to prostrate before him. Arberry refers to it under the misleading heading, "Adam worshipped by the angels."[2] Quranic scholars have tried, down the ages, to identify the historicity of Dhu al – Qarnayn. There is divergence of opinion among them about his true identity, as they cite different personalities in this context, ranging from (1) Alexander the Great to (2) a pre – historic king contemporary with Prophet Abraham (peace and blessings be upon him) bearing the identical name of Alexander, (3) a king of Persia, Ram and (4) a pre – historic Himyarite king from Yemen. However, Arberry arbitrarily equates Dhu al – Qarnayn with Alexander the Great.[3] It is recorded in Surah al – Ahqaf that Allah made some jinn listen to the Quran. Arberry, however, places this incident under the Index heading "Jinn listen to Muhammad."[4] This readily brings to mind the Orientalist stance about the Prophet's authorship of the Quran.
- Another glaring incongruity is Arberry's work is his inappropriate use of the peculiarity Chritian theological terminology. In his Preface he cites the Quranic passage on the birth of Prophet Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him) while

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1 Ibid., 2, 364.

2 Ibid., 2, 364.

3 Ibid., 2, 364.

4 Ibid., 2, 364.

calling it as the "passage on the Nativity of Our Lord."[1] In a similar vein is his claim about the distinguishing feature of his translation:

> If, set out like this, the Koranic treatment of his most sacred theme seems to recall, however, distantly and however faintly, some medieval Christian carol, the resemblance is surely not fortuitous; but I make bold to claim that the point escapes notice in any other kind of translation.[2]

As already stated, this work is not free from instances of omission and mistranslation either. Following are the examples in which Arberry, for reasons best known to him, fails to render certain Quranic words in his translation, as a result of which it has turned faulty.

1. Ali Imran 3 : 43 : The Quranic phrase ma' al –rak 'iyin is left out:

   Mary, be obedient to thy Lord, prostrating and bowing before Him. (Arberry's incorrect version).[3]

   Mary, be obedient to your Lord, prostrating and bowing with those who bow. (Correct).

2. al – Dhariyat 51 : 4 : The Quranic expression *amra* is left out:

   By the swift scatterers and the burden bearers and the smooth runners and the partitioners. (Incorrect)[4]

   By the swift scatterers and the burden bearers and the smooth runners and the partitioners by command. (Correct)

3. al – Mumtahanah 60 : 12 : The Quranic expression *fabaa 'iyubunna* is left out:

   O Prophet, when believing women came to thee, swearing fealty to thee upon the terms that they will not associate with God anything, and will not steal, neither commit

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1 Ibid., 1, 21.

2 Ibid., 1, 27,

3 Ibid., 1, 79.

4 Ibid., 2, 237.

adultery, nor slay their children, nor bring a calumny, they forge between their hands and their feet, nor disobey thee in ought honourable, as God's forgiveness for them. God is all – forgiving, All – Compassionate. (Incorrect).[1]

O Prophet, when believing woman come to you, swearing fealty to you upon the terms that they will not associate with God anything, and will not steal, neither commit adultery, nor slay their children, nor bring a calumny, they forge between their hands and their feet nor disobey you in ought honourable *then accept their allegiance,* as God's forgiveness for them. God is All – Forgiving, All Compassionate. (Correct).

Instances of mistranslations too, are not uncommon in Arberry's work. Illustrative of it are the following:

- Al – Tawbah 9: 64 "The hypocrites are afraid, lest a Surah should be sent down against them, *telling* thee what is in their hearts." (Incorrect).[2]

  "The hypocrites are afraid, lest a Surah should be sent down about them, showing them what is in their hearts." (Correct)

- Al – Anfal 8 : 59 "*And thou are not to suppose* that they who disbelieve me have outstripped Me; they cannot frustrate My Will." (Incorrect)[3]

  "And let not those who disbelieve suppose that they can outstrip. They cannot frustrate (Allah's purpose)."

- Al – Furqan 25: 62 : "And it is He Who made the night and day a succession for whom *He desires* to remember or He desires to be thankful." (Incorrect)[4]

  "And it is He Who made the night and day a succession for him who desires to remember or desires to be thankful." (Correct)

- Al – Sajadah, 32 : 23 " Indeed We gave Moses the Book, so be not in doubt *concerning the encounter with him*." (Incorrect)[5]

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1 Ibid., 2, 273.

2 Ibid., 1, 214.

3 Ibid., 1, 204.

4 Ibid., 2, 61.

5 Ibid., 2, 119.

"Indeed We gave Moses the Book, so be not in doubt of his receiving it." (Correct)

- Al – Tawbah 9: 70: "Has there not come to you the tidings of those who were before you?" (Incorrect)[1]

  "Has there not come to you the tidings of those who were before them?" (Correct)

- Ali Imran 3:115: "And whatever good you do you shall not be denied the just reward of it." (Incorrect)[2]

  "And whatever good they do they shall not be denied the just reward of it." (Correct)

- Al – Shu 'ara 26:108: "So serve you God, and obey you me." (Incorrect)[3]

  "So fear God, and obey me." (Correct)

- al – Waqiah 56: 11 "Those are they brought nigh the Throne." (Incorrect)[4]

  "Those are they brought nigh." (Correct)

- al – Waqiah 56:88: "Then if he be of those brought nigh the Throne." (Incorrect)[5]

  "Then if he is of those brought nigh." (Correct)

- al – Nisa 4:157: "And for their saying, "We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God" – yet they did not slay him, nor crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them.

  Those who are at variance concerning him are surely in doubt regarding him they have no knowledge of him, except the following of surmise." (Incorrect)[6]

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1 Ibid., 1,215.

2 Ibid., 1, 88.

3 Ibid., 2, 69.

4 Ibid., 2, 254.

5 Ibid., 2, 257.

6 Ibid., 1, 123.

"And for their saying, "We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God" – yet they did not slay him, nor crucified him, but it appears so unto them. Those who are at variance concerning it are surely in doubt regarding it; they have no knowledge of it, except the following of surmise." (Correct)

- Yunus 10:88: "Moses said: Lord, Thou hast given to Pharaoh and his council adornment and possessions in this present life. Our Lord, let them go astray from Thy way." (Incorrect)[1]

  "Moses said: our Lord, You have given to Pharaoh and his council adornment and possessions in this present life and so, Our lord, they mislead (men) from Your way." (Incorrect)

- Hud 11:30: "O My people, who would help me against God, if I drive you away? Will you not remember"? (Incorrect)[2]

  "O My people, who would help against God, if I drive them away? Will you not take heed"? (Correct)

- Hud 11:46: "Said He, Noah! He is not of thy family; it is a deed not righteous. Do not ask Me that whereof thou hast no knowledge." (Incorrect)[3]

  "Said He, Noah! He is not of your family; for his conduct is unrighteous. So ask not of Me that of which you have no knowledge." (Correct)

As is evident from above examples, Arberry's mistranslation often twists the intended meaning of some Quranic verses. In view of his enviable mastery over Arabic language, these mistakes appear not only unpardonable but also inexplicable.

Another irksome feature of Arberry's work is his too literal translation of certain Quranic expressions. Granted the English equivalents employed by him may be etymologically or literally sound; nonetheless, they leave an odd impression on the mind of an

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1 Ibid., 1, 235.

2 Ibid., 1, 242.

3 Ibid., 1, 244.

average reader who may not necessarily appreciate the etymological back ground of the English equivalents chosen by Arberry. As is evident from the following examples of this type, Arberry's translation in these instances, far from advancing one's understanding of the Quran, makes the import of the Quran somewhat incomprehensible and bewilders the readers:

S. No.	**Surah No.**	**Verse No.**	**Quranic Expression**	**Arberry's choice**	**Better Choice**
1.	al- Hijr 15	53	'alim	Cunning	Wise
2.	al –Dhariayat51	28	'alim	Cunning	Wise
3.	al-Anbiya21	72	Nafila	In superfluity	Grandson or additional gift
4.	Fatir 35	34	Shakur	All-thankful	All-Appreciative
5.	Al-Shura42	23	Shakur	All-thankful	All-Appreciative
6.	Al-Taghabun 64	17	Shakur	All-thankful	All-Appreciative
7.	Al-Baqarah 2	158	Shakir	All-thankful	All-Responsive
8.	Al- A 'raf 7	157	al-nabi al-ummi	Prophet of common folk or The unlettered Prophet	
9.	Al- A 'raf7	158	al-nabi al-ummi	Prophet of common folk or The unlettered Prophet	

In his brilliant analysis, Muhammad Mohar Ali provides many more instances of Arberry's (a) employment of Christian theological terms that distort the meaning of the Quran, (b) distortion of the meaning, (c) mistakes owing to his failure to understand the Quranic expressions, (d) additions to or omissions from the original and (e) mistakes on account of his carelessness. Only some of these are recounted below:

(a) Equally purposeful is his translation of the first part of ayah 14:27 as "God confirms those who believe with the firm word." The clear meaning of yuthabbitu is "he established or makes

firm." The term "confirmation" has a very well known sense in Christian theology signifying "the rite by which people are admitted to full communion in many Christian churches" and "to confirm" means "to put through a ceremony to admit to full religious communion."

Again, a very significant twist is given in translating the initial clause of 16:102, as "Say: The Holy Spirit sent it down from thy Lord." The term ruh al –quds is another name for the angel Jibril and he is meant here. But Arberry gives a double twist here. He capitalizes [the Holy Spirit]… so as to make it conform to the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit, and he translates nazzala as "sent down," though it also means "brought down" and which is the sense here, especially as the phrase "from your Lord" follows it.

(b) The clause in 2:58 is translated as: "and say, Unburdening; We will forgive your transgressions."… Arberry translates the expression hittah as Unburdening, writing it with a capital letter and putting a semicolon after it. This makes the sense unintelligible, violates the grammatical from of its being a conditional clause and makes the clause "We will forgive you" appear as an independent statement rather than the conclusion of the conditional clause.

(c) He fails to grasp the meaning of the idiom 'an yadins in the last clause of ayah 9:29 and translates it as: "out of hand"; while the correct meaning of the idiom is "in submission." Again he misunderstands the idiomatic clause at the beginning of 21:64 faraja 'u ila anfusihim', and translates it as: "So, they returned one to another," which is confusing and unintelligible. The plain meaning of the expression is that "they reflected."

(d) Often an additional clause is added in the translation though it is not in the original. A gross instance of this is his translation of 11:25.

(e) Sometimes words are carelessly read and hence translated wrongly. Thus he translates the last clause of the ayah 30:22 inna fi dhalika la –ayatil lil alimin, as "surely in that are signs

for all living beings." Clearly he takes the word 'alimin, which is the accusative form of 'alimun meaning "men of knowledge," as 'alamin, meaning "all beings."[1]

Besides these, inaccurate and remote meanings are given for well known words giving distorted or derogatory senses. Thus, ajr (reward, recompense) is more often translated as "wage"; al-ba 'th (resurrection) is translated as "uprising" which word is susceptible of quite a different meaning than resurrection; mithqala dharrah (the weight of an atom) is translated as "a barbarian"; mursalin (Messengers) is translated as "Envoys"; tuftanuna (you are tried/tested) is translated as "you are being proved"; and so on.

To sum up, Arberry's translation, rich in stylistic qualities and sympathetic in its stance on Islam, is superior to other translations of the Quran rendered by Orientalists. Nonetheless, in view of the above criticism it should be used cautiously.

Publication details of the first edition.

London, Allen and Unwin, 1955, 2 Volumes, Volumes, Vol 1:350 pages and Vol. 2:367pages.

Number of Editions: 30

Other Reviews:

- M. Mohar Ali. *The Quran and the Orientalists,* Ipswich, UK, 2004, 343- 354.
- A.L. Tibawi, "Review on *The Koran Interpreted*," Islamic Quarterly (January1957), 8.
- Alfred Guillaume, "Review on *The Koran Interpreted*," Muslim World, 47:3 (July 1957), 248 -249.
- M. Ruthven, "Review on Arberry's *The Koran*," Middle East Journal 228, (June 1984), 19.

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[1] Muhammad Mohar Ali , The Quan and the Orientalists, Ipswich, UK, Jamiyat Ihyyaa Minhaaj al-Sunnah, 2004, pp. 345, 347, 348, 349 and 350 - 351.

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Dawood, N.J.
The Koran
(1956)

Born in Baghdad, Nessim Joseph Dawood (1927-), an Iraqi Jew, has been settled since 1945 in the UK and produced several translations from Arabic into English, including those of the Quran and Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah. Of all the English translators of the Quran, he is the only Jew. Intriguingly enough, he completed his translation of the Quran at the age of only twenty –nine years and it was readily brought out worldwide by Penguin, one of the most flourishing publishing houses in the West. Even the first edition came out simultaneously from the US, UK and Canada. Since then it has been reprinted more than 50 times. It is the most readily available translation in Western libraries and bookstores. Its copies are found in more than 2000 Western libraries.

As a typical Orientalist work, it is designed to mislead and prejudice the unsuspecting readers against Islam and Muslims. It conjures up an image of Islam and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) which is linked inextricably with usurpation, injustice and bloodshed. Nor is it a faithful translation. Its explanatory notes tend to misrepresent the message of Islam. It follows the chronological order of Surahs.

The 1989 revised edition of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation of the Quran appears to have been a trend –setter. For we now have revised editions of three other translations of the Quran, though these very greatly in the quality and quantity of the revision. The most significant is N.J. Dawood's The Koran (London, Penguin, 1990. Revised Edition 456 pages, ISBN: 0140445587). After 34 years of continuous publication the author and the publisher seem to have realized their mistake of having altered the received Surah order. Apart from this significant change, the author claims that his

work has now been completely revised in the light of a lifelong study of the style and language of the Koran. (p.3) However, while reviewing this work, Ziauddin Sardar dismisses outright the author's claim, saying that actually it is almost exactly the same as that of the original 1956 edition. The only noteworthy change is the use of the word "God" in the new edition for "Allah." ([1]) The truth, however, lies somewhere in between: Dawood has revised his work, substantially in some places and nominally elsewhere. In the Introduction (pp.1-4), one notes some slight changes, some of which are definitely welcome while others defy logic. For example, in the 1956 edition. Dawood criticizes the traditional Quranic Surah order, saying: 'It is unfortunate that in preparing the contents of the Quran for book form, its editor or editors followed no chronological sequence' (p.10). His criticism remains the same, the only difference being that in the revised edition the words 'it is unfortunate' have been dropped. However, a baffling change, also in the 1956 edition Dawood said: It is my belief that the Quran is not only one of the greatest books of prophetic literature, but the new edition, this has been changed, rather toned down, to the impersonal statement: 'It is acknowledged that the Quran is not only one of the most influential books of prophetic literature, but also a literary masterpiece in its own right' (p. 3). The reason for this change of opinion is not spelled out. Nor is any reason given for the switch from the chronological to traditional Surah order.

Notwithstanding Dawoods's claim of having 'completely revised' the 1956 edition, the translation remains, in the main, the same. Some of the Surahs have not been touched at all. For example, the translation of Surahs 99, 113 and 114 is identical with that of the earlier edition, while Surahs 55, 81, 48 and 93 show only slight changes. However, some Surahs have undergone a substantial change which is gratifying, for the revision in these Surahs has resulted in rectifying some of the earlier mistakes. For example, the translation of the following verses is no longer vitiated by unpardonable instances of mistranslation, omission and other mistakes: al- Rahman 55:8 and 24 and 56; al-Dahr 76:2, 10 and 30; al– Mutaffifin 83: 17 and 21; al- Layl 92: 13 and 85; al-Tin 95: 3

And 4 and al- Adiyat 100: 11. The author deserves credit for setting thing right at least in these places. However, Dawood's work still is not a reliable, error-free translation of the Quran. His hostile remarks about the Quran, and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) still mar the work. A cursory glance at the Chronological Table of the Main Events in the life of Muhammad (pp.7-8) reveals that violence and war are seen by Dawood as the main, rather only, events in the otherwise epoch-making life of Prophet (peace be upon him). Though wars figure prominently in this brief chronology, with the emphasis on the ' crushing, expelling and raiding of the Jews,' the only redeeming feature is that a detailed entry on the alleged atrocities against the Jewish tribe of Qurayzah has been dropped (1956 edition, pp. 13-14). Some glaring mistakes persist in Dawood's translation, ranging from mistranslation, omission and insertion of parenthetical material passed off as the translation of the text of the Quran. This cannot be justified in a work which has supposedly been thoroughly revised.

Following are some of the unpardonable instances of Dawood's failure to translate certain parts of the Quranic verses. For example, part of the Quranic verse Min qaumihi (al- 'Araf 7: 90, p.16) has been left untranslated. Likewise, the Quranic phrases fattakhadhat min dunihim hijaban (Maryam 19: 17, p.215) and min dun Allah (Maryam 19: 81, p. 219) also have not been translated.

An equally irksome and damaging feature of Dawood, translation is that many Quranic verses have been mistranslated, either because of the translator's inability to grasp their import or his sheer carelessness. Of the numerous examples, a few are: al- 'Araf 7: 90-2 (p.116); Maryam 19: 7, 20-2, 37, 78 and 82 (pp. 214, 215, 216 and 219); Ta Ha 20: 92-3 and 123, (pp. 224 and 226); and al-Furqan 25: 46 (p.255).

It is common knowledge that a too close, literal translation of the Quran is not desirable, for it defeats the very purpose of a translation which aims to facilitate one's access to the original. Though a translator of the Quran, Dawood included, enjoys certain license to fill gaps and supply essential information in line with the

context, which may enable readers to appreciate better the contents, this license is however, hedged in by certain imperative precautions. First the additional information distinguish between the actual Word of God and the translators, explanatory notes, however, important they may be. Moreover, such notes should be kept to the bare minimum so as not to disrupt the reading flow. Muslim translators have taken utmost care on this count in order to avoid any semblance of tampering with the Word of God. For should a careless translator insert his own views into the body of the translation, unsuspecting, non- Arabic speaking readers may mistakes it for the Word of God. Dawood has, regrettably, in many instances flagrantly flouted this norm and has inserted what is not the intent of the Quran. As a result, one notes such material which is not borne out by the Quranic text. So, far from helping the reader to better understand the meaning of the Quran, these interpolations subvert the Quranic message. This pernicious practice appears glaringly in the following instances: Ali 'Imran 3:15 and 61 (p.44 and 48); al – Araf 7: 49 (p. 113); Maryam 19: 18 (p. 215); Ta Ha 20: 44 and 73 (pp. 221 and 223).

In view of these serious flaws Dawood's translation, though obviously revised with the best of intentions, still does not do justice to the original. It is indeed bewildering that such a faulty and inaccurate translation is the most widely-circulated English translation of the Quran and the one most accessible to non-Muslims. The publisher claims to have sold over a million copies worldview. It is great pity that these readers will get only a garbled version of the meaning and message of the Quran.

Equally serious and deplorable is Dawood's lack of concern for Muslim sensitivities, as reflected in this work. His understanding of the language, style and message of the Quran, indeed his very understanding of Islam, is far from satisfactory. This comes out at its sharpest in hid pointing to the so-called 'influence of Jewish and Christian teachings' (p.1) on Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and, more importantly, on the back cover of this work which carries these words: 'The Koran still provides the rules of conduct

fundamental to the Arab way of life.' Does Dawood or anyone else need reminding that the overwhelming majority of Muslims since the very early days of Islam have been non-Arabs? Apart from betraying his ignorance about Muslim demography, this remark sums up Dawood's incomprehension of the universality of the Quran.

Reference

1. The Independent, 27 January 1991

Publication details of the first edition:

London, Penguin Books, 1956. 427 pages.

Number of Editions: 50

Other Reviews:

Bishop, E.F.F., " The Koran: A New Translation" Muslim World, 49: 1 (January 1959), 55- 56.

Sardar, Ziauddin, "Review on the Koran," The Independent, London (27 January 1991).

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Cleary, Thomas
The Quran: A New Translation
(2004)

Thomas Cleary (b. 1949), based in California, USA, is a scholar of Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian and Islamic religious traditions. Apart from the Quran, he has translated also the following work representing the Muslim wisdom tradition: *Living and Dying with Grace Counsels of Hadrat Ali* (1995). His *magnum opus* is the five volumes *Classics of Buddhism and Zen.*

Amid the spate of English translations of the Quran, Thomas Cleary's *The Quran* stands out on many counts. Both the translator and publisher deserve every credit for this excellent work which is destined to go a long way in conveying some of the hallmarks of the Quran, especially to non-Muslim readers.

What is most gratifying about this work is that the translator introduces Islam and the Quran, as Muslims believe. Unlike his unworthy predecessors, Cleary does not cast aspersions on the divine origin of the Quran. Nor does he try to trace its Judaic and Christian sources. Far from it, he makes a genuine attempt to bring home the importance and relevance of the Quran for the post-Christian, secular mind of our times. For him 'the Quran offers a way to explore an attitude that fully embraces the quest for knowledge and understanding that is the essence of science, while at the same time and indeed for the same reasons, fully embraces the awe, humility, reverence and conscience without which humankind does indeed go too far in considering itself to be self-sufficient.' (pp. vii-viii). Alive to the need for an objective study of the much-maligned Islam and the Quran, he states: 'For non-Muslims, one special advantage in reading the Quran is that it provides an authentic point of reference from which to examine the biased stereotypes of Islam to which Westerners are habitually

exposed.' (p.viii). While placing the Quran in the Scriptural tradition of the Torah and the Gospel, Cleary draws attention to the uniqueness of the Quran 'in the entire context of classical sacred tradition throughout the world, in having been revealed in the full light of history, through the offices of a Prophet who was well known.' (p.ix). The universality of the Quran too, is recognized in categorical terms: "The Quran speaks to humanity nations, communities, families, and individuals; complete with both as a whole, to an outer teaching and an inner teaching, it speaks to both persons and to souls, individually and collectively." (p.x) More importantly, in a sharp contrast to the Orientalists of all hues and shades, Cleary does not calumniate Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). Nor does he attribute the phenomenal success and spread of Islam to quasi-economic, socio-political or tribal factors: "Muhammad and the Muslims emerged triumphant, not by virtue of a crushing military victory but by constant devotion to Islam and indefatigable resistance to oppression... Through the promulgation of the Quran and his own example as an inspired Prophet Muhammad also reformed many aspects of family, social and economic life." (p. xii).

Cleary's selection of Quranic passages for translation is both intelligent and wide-ranging. While the translation of some shorter *Surahs* such as *al-Fatihah*, and from *al-Balad* to *al-Nas* (90-114) appear in full, select passages from longer *Surahs* are also included in the work. These selections in elegant English, being faithful in a large measure to the original, succeed in presenting before readers major themes of the Quran - its worldview, its eschatology, its account of earlier Prophets and their respective communities, its arguments in support of the main articles of Islamic faith and, in sum, its guidance for men and women of all times and places.

Cleary elucidates the message of the Quran with his helpful notes on several Quranic passages. Like the translator's 'Introduction' (pp. vii-xviii), his 'Notes' (pp. 165-202) reflect his remarkable understanding of the meaning and message of Islam and the Quran and his balanced judicious approach. Here are some gems of his genuine Islamic scholarship:

(a) Without entering into polemics Cleary makes it abundantly clear that what the Quran refers to as Injil is 'not exactly identical to the Christian New Testament as a whole nor to the Four Gospels as they are now found in the Christian Bible.' (p. 167).

(b) Cleary does well in correcting a common misconception: '...in the Quranic recollection Adam is not seduced into the fall by his wife, as in the familiar Judeo-Christian version of this story; in the Quran, Adam and his wife are both duped by the insidious suggestion of the devil.'

(c) In a similar vein is his next note: '... the revelation in the Quran differs from Judeo-Christian tradition in its image of Adam. Earlier revelation focuses on the weakness of human nature and the need for atonement; the Quranic revelation focuses on the ever present reality of atonement, the power and mercy of God, in restoring Adam to sanity and making him the first Messenger.' (p. 171).

(d) The role of the Quran is acclaimed thus: *'al-Furqan'* (the Criterion) 'is a name of the Quran, especially in its function of distinguishing the original truth from false accretions in earlier revelations as they had come down through history.' (p.176).

(e) The Islamic law of inheritance, as stipulated in *Surah al-Nisa*, is not misconstrued as a blatant case of gender bias in Islam, as is alleged by Orientalists. On the contrary, Cleary vindicates it stoutly: 'The portions for men and women differ because a family man is obliged to support others, while a woman is not.' (p. 179).

(f) Equally judicious are Cleary's notes on the Quranic Christology: 'The Quran affirms the uncompromised unity of God without diminishing the dignity of Jesus the Messiah as a Word, Spirit, or Breath of Life from God… According to the Gospel, Jesus said that the revelation he brought was not antagonistic to earlier revelation but in fact verified its truth. The Quran acknowledges this mission of Jesus and similarly presents itself as verifying and clarifying the essential message

of the earlier revelations transmitted by Jews and Christians.' (pp. 180-1).

(g) The Quranic assertion about the humanness of Messengers is reported faithfully and approvingly: 'The Quran repeatedly affirms that the prophets were human to counter the belief or accusation that they claimed higher status than that. It also affirms that prophets are inspired by God, to counter the idolaters' belief that the humanity of a Messenger disproves the divine source of the Message.' (p. 184).

(h) In a similar vein is Cleary's praise for the Quranic denunciation of monasticism: "The trial of the world is not surmounted by trying to avoid it, but by living life as best we can," (p. 184).

(i) Likewise, the Quranic concept of *infaq* (spending) elicits his hearty endorsement: "To spend means to spend what one has in charity or other good works;" sometimes it is referred to as "spending in the way of God." This usage is quite common in the Quran, illustrating the importance of contributing to the balance and welfare of society. (p. 193).

The Quranic stance on wealth is brought into sharp relief by this insightful elucidation: 'The anti-idolatrous anti-materialistic principle of Islam expressed in the Quran is not rejection or denial of the things of the world but rather proper subordination of things of the world to God as the ultimate Reality. That means that the wealth of the world is not good or bad in itself, but its yields depend upon its use.' (p. 201).

Apart from offering such a sound exposition of the meaning and message of the Quran, Cleary's notes are characterized by a novel feature. Often he points to the affinity between the Quran and Buddhist religious tradition.

As a distinguished translator of Buddhist and Taoist religious texts, he cites, at places, some passages, mostly from The *Flower Ornament Scripture*, which are identical in their tenor with Quranic passages. According to this comparative study, on such a wide range of topics and themes as the conduct of hypocrites, giving goods and money for love of God, charity, nature and immense

range of knowledge, excellence of giving gifts, breaking away cleanly from blind conformity to ancestral ways, seeking the light of God in the awareness of God, and the use of historical events for bringing home eternal truth (pp. 171, 175, 177, 189, 190, 191, 194 and 200) the Islamic and Buddhist traditions have much in common. The students of the Quran owe a debt of gratitude to Cleary for drawing their attention to this largely unacknowledged aspect of the Quranic scholarship.

Next to Buddhism, Cleary appears to have a special interest in mysticism, especially Islamic Sufistic texts, which comes to the fore in his notes and Bibliography (pp. 170, 181, 196 and 203).

Notwithstanding its many merits, the work is marred by some shortcomings. The transliteration of Arabic words is pitiably faulty. *Fusus al-Hikam* appears in the almost unrecognizable form 'Fuhuus al-Hikaam' (p. 165). Likewise, it is hard to make sense of the renderings 'Rabbil! Aalamiina' (p. 165) and 'Al aayataani aakhiri suurati man qara'a bihimaa fii laylatin kafataahu' (*Sahhiih*) (p. 175). At places Cleary betrays his inability to grasp fully the import of the Quran. For example, verse 1 of *al-Nisa* (p. 178) and 37 of *Saba* (p. 191) are not interpreted properly. The translator would have done well to assign headings/sub-headings to the translated passages. In this particular respect

The Quran: Basic Teachings, a highly useful thematic selection of the Quran, brought out by the Islamic Foundation, Leicester (UK) stands out as a shining example of editorial assiduity. Owing to the above reason, the absence of a Subject Index in Cleary's selection is therefore all the more irksome for readers. These blemishes apart, Cleary's is undoubtedly a work to be treasured for his empathy.

Publication details of the first edition:
Starlatch, Llc, 2004. ISBN: 192969444-X
Note: This review is, however, on the selection of this work, *The Essential Koran: An Introductory Selection of Readings from the Quran*. Harper Collins, Delhi, 1997. ISBN:0-06-2501968

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Starkovsky, Nicolas
The Koran Handbook An Annotated Translation
(2005)

Nicolas Starkovsky (b.1922) was a scholar of Islamic/Quranic studies of the Russian descent. Little wonder then that his Bibliography refers to some little known works on the Quran by Russian writers, including some translations of the Quran into Russian. His long stay in Egypt helped him gain proficiency in Arabic. Together with his wife, Lilia Kurasheva Starkovsky as co-translator he produced the Russian translation of the Quran. He introduces his English translation thus: "…a teaching tool to explain in any analytical fashion the creed of nearly one billion people. Based on the most moderate Sunni traditions, it includes factual descriptions of Shiism, Sufism and other important distinctions." (p.ix)

What, however, lends a grotesque peculiarity to his venture is his rearrangement of the Quranic text. He does not follow the traditional, received (*tawqifi*) Surah order or even the chronological one with which some Western scholars have some fixation. While going a step further, he has moved into a different, so far unchartered direction. He has grouped 114 Quranic Surahs under the following 7 thematic categories: 1) The foundations of Islamic Belief comprising 34 Surahs 2) Eschatology and Apocalysis: 18 Surahs. 3) Stories about Prophets: 18 Surahs 4) Attitude to other Religions: 18 Surahs 5) Doxologies: 10 Surahs 6) Legal Matters: 11 Surahs and 7) Conduct of the Holy War: 13 Surahs.

This arbitrary rearrangement of the Quran is highly problematic. It is hard to endorse his assignment of a single theme "Holy War" to Surah Al-Nasr which only states the *en masse* acceptance of Islam and instruction to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to turn wholly to Allah. Likewise, Surah Al-Ahzab cannot be labelled as a war-

centric Surah, as it deals extensively with the following themes which have nothing to do with war: adopted children, code of conduct for the Prophet's wives and all Muslim women, the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab (RA), the Prophet (peace be upon him) as the role model and the Final Messenger on whom Allah and His angels send benedictions, gender segregation, outer garment for Muslim women and the limit set on the Prophet's marriages etc. As the whole Quranic text is permeated with the articles of Islamic faith, particularly monotheism and Allah's signs, it is not a tenable proposition to hold that only 34 out of the total 114 Surahs take up Islamic beliefs.

In his zeal to hoist a particular theme on a Surah, he has gone to such absurd lengths: in cutting verses of longer Surahs into pieces and placing them in various sections. For example, verses 1 to 109 of Ali Imran appear in Section 4 and 110 to 200 in Section 7. Surahs Al-Baqarah. Al-Nisa and Al-Anam have been subjected to similar cut and paste exercise.

This aberration apart, his overall view of Islam/ the Quran is markedly different from that of most of the Orientalists. Unlike them he does not misrepresent Islam, equating it with violence and debauchery and does not dismiss the Quran as a poor replica of the Bible. He is fair enough in presenting the Islamic belief system and lets the Quran speak for itself, without interpolating his whimsical notions into its exposition. While he recognizes the common ground between the Judaeo-Christian traditions and Islam he does not the reject the latter as a heresy, devoid of anything good. He exhorts his Western readers: "…they should feel that the Koran belongs to the same cultural tradition, the beneficiaries of which can come to terms with each other to end wars, hatred, derision, terrorism and persecutions that have disgraced humanity for centuries of discord." (p.xiii). It is gratifying that he reproduces the Muslim belief about the Quran as the Word of God, not the product of the Prophet's mind or some hotch-potch conjured up in the 9th century as the Revisionists/Neo-Orientalists would make us believe. He uses even the honorific formula of reverence, "May

God accept his prayers and grant him peace" of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (p.xiv). Equally edifying is his confession: "Yes, I am fascinated by the Koran and I have derived immense satisfaction from working on it." (p.xviii). He identifies some "cross referencing" between the Bible and the Quran, particularly in their respective accounts of Prophets. However, unlike most of the Orientalist, he does not speak of the Prophet Muhammad's unacknowledged borrowings from the Bible. Rather, he draws attention to the "educational values" (p.xxiii) of the Quranic description whereas, according to him, the Bible is focused only on detailed chronology and historical events. However, he is critical of the polemical attacks in the Quran directed against Jews and Christians. Being God's final, unadulterated message for humanity for all time to come, the Quran does point out the tampering which has crept into the Bible and urges them to believe in the teachings common to the Bible and the Quran. With fascination Starkovsky extols the Quran as "a monolithic Revelation with one Message, one Prophet, one God" which is in a sharp contrast to the" discontinuous series of books in the Old Testament which are widely different in style and subject matter" and the New Testament, of which the books, originally oral accounts were "compiled long after the death of Jesus Christ and selected by contending religious factions over several generations," "resulting in some discarded books" (p.xxiv)

His translation is, on the whole, accurate, supplemented and complemented with helpful, brief annotations. At places, he identifies parallelism between the Bible and the Quran. For example, in explicating Surah Al-Fatihah he cites the Christian Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). However, he presses home only resemblance and does not hurl the oft-repeated Orientalists charge of plagiarism. (pp.1-2). Discerningly enough, he states that the bodily functions of God as referred to in the Quran "are to be understood metaphorically: they are not meant to create an anthromorphic image of the Supreme Being." (p.4) Equally astute is his observation: "Islam forbids to make any kind of images of God and Muhammad" (p.4) His interpretation of Surah Al-Fil,

nonetheless, borders on denying the miraculous destruction of Abraha's army, as he attributes their rout to "small pox" (p.20).

His Bibliography is marred by the preponderance of Qadyani translations. The transliteration system adopted by him is awkwardly unusual: the use of "dj" for "j" and "k" for "q." As a result, one comes across such unfamiliar instances: Al-Djudi, Bani Qainuka, Djihad, Munafikun, Ragim, Sadakat, Zakkum etc. Throughout he has used only the English translation of Quranic Surah titles.

In sum, it is an important English translation by a Western/Russian scholar which is largely free from the errors which generally vitiate Orientalist forays.

Details of the first edition:
Algora Publishing, New York, 2005. pp.544. ISBN: 087586-376-0

107
Jones, Alan
The Quran Translated into English
(2007)

It was in 1955, some fifty years ago, that there appeared the last noteworthy Orientalist foray (A.J. Arberry's The Koran Interpreted) in the field of the English translations of the Quran, which for obvious reasons had been dominated for centuries by Orientalists. I noted this trend with a sense of relief while compiling in 2002 Bibliography of the Translations of the Meanings of the Glorious Quran into English 1649-2002: A Critical Study (Madina, Saudi Arabia, King Fahd Quran Printing Complex, 2007). For, it seemed to signal the end of the regrettable, rather deplorable Qrientalists' practice of distorting and discrediting things Quranic and thereby misleading the unsuspecting readers whose only access to the Quran and Islam was through their works. With the publication of several English translations by Muslim scholars (the year of their publication indicated with parenthesis), readers are now in a better position to gain or renew their acquaintance with the meaning and message of the Quran. Of these translations by Muslims, special mention may be made of Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930), Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934-37), Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1957), Muhammad Asad (1980), T.B. Irving (1985), M.M. Khatib (1986) and M.A. Abdul Haleem (2004).The field was enriched further by the production of the English versions of some tafsir, originally in Urdu, by Muslim scholars such as Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi, Abul Ala Mawdudi, Abul kalam Azad, Amin Ahsan Islahi, Mahmoodul Hasan and Shabbir Ahmad Usmani , and Mufti Muhammad Shafi.

Alan Jone's The Quran: Translated into English (2007), however, marks the return of the Orientalist breed with vengeance. It unabashedly resurrects several medieval misconceptions and half-truths about Islam and the Quran. On studying Jone's work one

gathers the impressions that the Quran is a plagiarized version of the Bible, which is unintelligible and backs order of any sort and is also ferociously polemical against non-Muslims.

The only feature of the Quran highlighted by Jones throughout his work is that it is patently polemical. First, he makes this point in his Introduction: "Polemic… is to be found regularly throughout the Quran." (p.13) In order to buttress the same, he has used this adjective "polemical" hundreds of times. Even while providing a brief overview of each Surah, prefacing his English rendering of the Quranic text, he makes it a point to harp on what he perceives as its polemical thrust. This is illustrated by his comments on the first ten Quranic Surahs. His one page introduction to Surah Al-Baqarah speaks, at least, six times of its polemical design. (p.24) As to the next Surah: "The core of it [Surah Ali Imran] is polemical passage on the nature of Jesus." (p.64)Equally confrontationist, in Jones's view, is Surah al- Nisa: "It [the Surah] is dominated by polemic: unbelievers in general are frequently attacked, and there are more direct passages against the Jews, and the hypocrites." (p.87) Similar in tenor in his estimate, is the next one, Surah al-Maidah: "The polemic is for the most part directed at the Jews and the Christians. The stance towards them varies from tolerance to condemnation." (p.110)So is Surah al A 'nam: "The Surah is notable for its strong polemical emphasis, much of it addressed to or through Muhammad… Much of the polemic is condemnation …" (p.128) For Jones, Surah al- A 'raf relates the story of "a nameless failed prophet, which leads into a substantial piece of polemic." (p.147) Surah al- Anfal is described as 'a mixture of polemic.' (p.169) While Surah al- Tawbah, according to him, consists of " a complex series of polemical passages… polemic follows in Verses 9-10… with Verse 12 polemic intensifies and continues to the end of Verse16. Verses 17-28 form a further passage of polemic… At Verse 29 the attack switches to… the Jews and Christians. The attack which lasts to verse 35 is…. unforgiving. Those who do not follow the approved path… are all condemned" (pp.178-179). As to Surah Yunus, Jones brands it as thoroughly polemical as well:

"Polemic starts as Verse 7 and continues to Verse 70…. Polemic returns with Verse 93 and continues to the end of the sura."(p.195).

In sum, Jones makes his readers believe that each and every Quranic Surah is intensely polemical, demonizing non-Muslims. Such labeling both reflects and aggravates the regrettable post 9/11 divide between "us" and "them." It brings to mind hordes of violent Muslims running after the blood of non- Muslims. For this is precisely what, according to Jones, the Quran repeatedly asks them to do.

For Jones, the Quran is not an original work either. It consists of material borrowed from the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Jones rehashes this centuries-old Orientalist stance in his opening note on the contents of the Quran: "In fact, Old Testament stories, often in a guise somewhat different from that in the Bible, dominate much of the narrative that occurs in the Quran." (p.13) Throughout his work Jones dwells at the same point. Take as illustrative his pronouncement on Surah Yunus: "…. By far the most interesting and instructive parallel is between Surah 12 and Genesis 37-47… the Quranic story includes details from the Midrash as well as Genesis… Though the narrative's closest links are with the lengthy account in Genesis, it contains details, that are to be found in later Jewish tradition." (pp. 14 and 220).

More devastating and parochial, however, is Jones's following dogmatic assertion about the Biblical origin of the Quran:

> The most commonly accepted view is that Muhammad received most of his information about Biblical and post-Biblical stories through informants who talked to him; that this material was digested and meditated on; and that eventually meditation induced Muhammad to recite.
>
> It should be added that there is some corroboration in Hadith that Muhammad received stories and information from various individuals, including Jews and Christians, and that the material he received from them found its way into the Quranic text.(p20).

Little wonder that Jones finds in the Quranic account of the Prophet Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him) in Verses 48-49 of Ali 'Imran a re-echo and of "Midrashic parallels" (p.158) in the Quranic description of the miracles granted to the Prophet Moses (peace and blessings be upon him) described in Verses 106-108 of al-A 'raf. Likewise, he discovers "the post- Biblical Jewish idea" (p.211) in the Quranic narrative in Verses 39-41 of Surah Hud about the Prophet Noah (peace and blessings be upon him).

Not only the Bible even "popular Near Eastern tales" (p. 271) are identified as the source of the Quranic stories in Surah al- Kahf about the seven sleepers, the encounter between the Prophet Moses (peace and blessings be upon him) and al-Khidr, and Dhu'l-Qarnyan. Of the same import is his following comment: "The account of Solomon and Sheba (Verses 17 to 44 of Surah al-Naml) recalls a Jewish Aramaic account found in the Second Targum on Esther." (p. 345) With an air of authority, Jones declares that the stories from the Old Testament and New Testament constitute what is passed off as the Quran. (p.573).

Jones assails the Quran from yet another angle- the Quranic text is highly problematic both in its stylistic presentation and its subject matter. He drives home this message as he qualifies many Quranic terms and expressions with these negative, discreditable adjectives: "disputed" (p.31), "uncertain" (pp.31, 51, 55, 168 and 286), "unclear" (p.72), "conflicting" (p. 90), "doubtful" (p. 171), "not clear" (pp.176, 308, 549 and 550), "vague" (pp. 226 and 509), "loose" (p. 169), "difficult"(p.238 and 261), "not cogent" (p. 380), "troublesome" (p. 402), "problematical" (415 and 469), "very difficult" (p.128) and "exact meaning not known." (p.591).

Thus, the Quran which is acclaimed for its inimitable style and its lucid text and which has won over the hearts and minds of billions of human beings is made to look as an intractable, worthless work, of which the meaning and message cannot by grasped by an ordinary person.

While closely following in the footsteps of his Orientalist predecessors, namely Gustav Weil, Theodore Noeldeke, J.M.

Rodwell and Richard Bell, Jones calls into question the received order and chronology of almost every Surah. He raises disturbing questions about the history of the collection of the Quran. At the very outset, in his Introduction he launches this full frontal attack.

> It is not known what happened after Muhammad's death to the material written by the copyists… there is a large number of surahs whose dating remains highly doubtful. (pp.11-12).

Even Surah al- Fatihah, of which the recitation has been an integral part of the five obligatory Prayers from the very early days of Islam, appears, in Jones's view, to have undergone revision: "The Surah is of uncertain date… It is conceivable that the last verse is a later modification" (p. 23). A similar judgement is pronounced about Surah al- a 'raf: "The Surah is generally taken to be late Meccan, though there can be little doubt that there was some recasting and expansion at Medina." (p.147) Equally unfounded are his observations on the textual history and chronology of Surah al-Tawbah… the historical detail [of the proclamation of immunity in Verses 1 -12] is highly suspect… There is a distinct possibility that the Surah was still being added to when Muhammad died. (pp. 178-179).

Thus far from being a Scripture worthy of respect, the Quran is scornfully described as a haphazard admixture of such ideas and concepts which an average reader cannot decipher. It is marred further, according to Jones, by numerous textual and editorial problems and by the inclusion of even "spurious verses" (p.585). Needless to add, Jones's work is unmistakably cast in the medieval mould, reminiscent of the first English translation by Alexander Ross in 1649, of which the sole objective was to poison the minds of readers against Islam and the Quran. Such deep-rooted hostility under the guise of scholarship is both regrettable and anachronistic.

Publication details of the first edition:

Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007. 605 pages ISBN: 978090604631

Number of Edition: 1

108
Droge, A. J.
The Quran: A New Annotated Translation
(2014)

Notwithstanding A. J. Droge's disclaimer that he is not 'taking sides' (p. xxxii) with the two leading Orientalists of our time, John Wansbrough and John Burton, his work on the Quran is vitiated by almost all the errors of the perspective spawned by his predecessor and contemporary Orientalists. For, on reading his work one is left with only such negative impressions about the Quran: it is a problematic text, teeming with lacunae, obscurity, and uncertainty of meaning, and marred by 'later additions, glosses, and insertions'; 'misplaced' and 'out of place' clauses and parts, 'revision,' 'omission,' and mixed up 'variant recessions.' Worse, his work parades some downright bizarre and even wildly contradictory conjectures about the revelation of the Quran:

(a) 'There was an actual edition of the Quran in the Prophet's possession' (p. 172).

(b) The Quran itself 'implies the existence of Qurans in other languages' (pp. 142 and 308).

(c) The Quran is 'in God's possession, which is larger than what has been "sent down"' (p. 181).

(d) The gradual revelation of the Quran in twenty-three years 'is open to question' (pp. 184, 414 and 442).

(e) "There are other passages, like this one [al-Dukhan 44:3] which indicate that the Quran was "sent down" or revealed all at once" (pp. 334 and 414).

(f) This [al-Qiyamah 75:18] implies that the Prophet actually heard the Quran recited (or dictated) by God himself (p. 411).

Moreover, in his opinion as many as 116 Quranic verses, terms or concepts are 'obscure, of uncertain meaning, mysterious, or lack clarity, and hence the Quran is 'a puzzling text (pp. 3, 21, 23, 25, 27, 28, 41, 43, 45, 47, 52, 57, 58, 63, 93,94, 102, 105, 106, 112, 139, 144, 146, 156, 160, 163, 164, 181, 185, 189, 190, 199, 202, 203,209, 210, 214, 216, 217, 218, 221, 224, 228, 229, 234, 235, 236, 238, 240, 242, 251, 254,255, 269, 277, 279, 282, 291, 302, 305, 319, 329, 331, 335, 336, 361, 367, 375, 379, 388,391, 392, 411, 413, 415, 419, 425, 428, 433, 441, 442, 445, 446, 450, and 452).

Equally tendentious is his twisting of the meaning of the Quran, at times, even beyond recognition:

(i) The Quran prescribes the waiting period of four months and ten days for widows, to which Droge gives this mind-boggling spin: 'The stipulated waiting period could be fourteen months (four months and ten)' (p. 25).

(ii) Although he himself defines al-Muhajirun (Al-Baqarah 2: 218) as those who had migrated in the Prophet Muhammad's day from Makkah to Madinah, he confounds readers by adding: 'This is not explicitly stated in the Quran' (p. 23).

(iii) Even in the face of the extensive coverage of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) in the Quran, Droge finds fault with the Quran for not having 'any discussion of the ideas associated with the Messiah,' (p. 35) and for not mentioning Joseph, Jesus's putative father (p. 35). His other grudge is: "There are conflicting views of Jesus' fate in the Quran" (p. 36).

(iv) The Quranic waiver of the past misdeeds of the early Muslims in the pre-Islamic days impels him to draw this sinister inference: 'This appears to make eating or drinking something forbidden not a very serious matter for believers' (p. 72).

(v) His complaint against the Quran on the authority of 'some scholars' is that 'in the Meccan suras the existence of "jinn" is taken for granted but that term disappears from the Medinan suras' (p. 84).

(vi) His other fallacious conclusion is: 'It [al-Anfal 7:19] may mean that the disbelievers had their chance for victory (at Badr?) but lost' (p. 108).

(vii) He calls into question even this simple obvious point that al-Madinah (al-Tawbah 9:101) is identical with the town, Madinah, saying: "Whether this refers to the city of 'Medina' in present day Saudi Arabia is disputed by some modern scholars." (p. 121).

(viii) The Quranic expression, *hadha al-Quran* (this Quran), mentioned in Yunus 10:37, persuades him of 'the existence of other Qurans' (p. 127). Throughout his work he harps at 'the existence of 'Qurans' (as it were) in other languages' (pp. 142, 235, 250, 268, 308, 318, 323 and 328).

(ix) His other fanciful conjecture is that the Quranic account of *miraj* (the Night Journey and Ascension to Heaven) in al-Isra' 17:1 'may refer to Moses' (p. 175).

(x) His list of charges against the Quran is almost unending. He takes an exception to the angels' prayer for the believers, mentioned in Ghafir 40:7: 'The idea of the angels offering intercessory prayer for the forgiveness of believers [is] unusual' (p. 312).

(xi) The Quranic allusion to the Prophet Muhammad's burden in al-Sharh 94:2 is maliciously explained by him as 'the burden of sins committed in his earlier life' (p. 439). Droge has the audacity to level this baseless charge in the face of the fact that even the worst enemies of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the disbelieving Makkans called him *al-sadiq* (the truthful one) and *al-amin* (the trustworthy one) in recognition of his unblemished character and conduct in his pre-Prophetic life.

(xii) As part of his mission to discredit Quranic statements, he raises doubts about even this simple, historical fact of the Makkan trade caravans going to Yemen in winter and to Syria in summer

(Quraysh 106:2), remarking: 'Both claims are open to question' (p. 451).

(xiii) Not content with contesting the Quranic statements, he takes to even playing havoc with the Quranic commands by way of distorting them: al-Nisa' 4:43 is misconstrued by him thus: 'Such a proviso presumes that the consumption of alcohol is permitted' (p. 50).

Apart from problematising the Quranic text, Droge's work also wreaks havoc upon its received order by his frequent comments on the alleged 'lacunae,' 'later insertions,' and 'misplaced clauses' in the Quranic text. In so doing, he appears to be following in the footsteps of J. M. Rodwell, Richard Bell and John Burton. Here is a selection of his devastating comments which are nothing short of surgical intrusions into the sacrosanct received order of the Quran text:

(1) Verse 36 of Al Imran 'looks like a later insertion' (p. 34).

(2) Part of Verse 48 of Al Imran is 'out of place' (p. 35).

(3) 'This clause [in Verse 2 of al-Ma'idah] seems misplaced, and would fit better in Verse 1' (p. 63).

(4) 'The two sentences [in Verse 3 of al-Ma'idah] are out of place in their present location.' (p. 64)

(5) Verse 5 of al-Anfal is 'a later insertion' (p. 107).

(6) 'The switch in [Satan's] name in this sentence [Verse 64 of Banu Isra'il]... may be a later gloss' (p. 180).

(7) 'Something appears to be missing' from Verse 17 of Hud. (p. 134)

(8) Verse 35 of Hud is 'out of place; it may have originally stood in the context of Verses 13-14 of Hud' (p. 135).

(9) 'Some revision has been made in the text of the Quran [al-Rad 13:39]' (p. 154).

(10) Verse 35 of al-Nur is 'probably a later addition' (p. 230).

(11) 'Verses 18-22 of Al-Shuara' may be a later addition, since it interrupts the connection between Verses 15-17 and 23' (p. 240).

(12) Certain words 'must have fallen out of Verse 29 of Surah Luqman. (p. 271).

(13) The repetition of the Quranic phrase *sunnat Allah* [in Verse 43 of Fatir] is 'the result of scribal error (dittography)' (p. 289).

(14) "These two descriptions [of the two Gardens in Verses 46 and 62 of al-Rahman] are probably variant recensions which somehow have become attached" (p. 368).

(15) Part of Verse 2 of al-Insan is 'out of place (perhaps a scribal error), and would fit better if transferred to the middle of the following verse.' (p. 413).

(16) On the authority of some unspecified "modern scholars" he contends that Verses 20-21 of al-Takwir 'were added later to make Gabriel the "honorable messenger" and to turn what was originally a theophany (Cf. 53: 1-18) into an "angelophany" (p. 423).

Comparative religion is a significant strand of Droge's work. He deserves credit for not harping incessantly, unlike other Orientalists, on the Judaeo-Christian origin of the Quran. His comments on the Quranic discourse on the Judaeo-Christian tradition stand out for their objectivity and freshness of perspective. In several instances he identifies the similarity in the Biblical and Quranic descriptions of a range of terms and concepts (pp. 1, 5, 6, 7,9, 11,12, 15, 21, 22, 26, 63, 82, 225, 362). More significantly, in the following instances he brings home the originality of the Quran, for making a marked departure from the Bible. Thus, in his opinion the Quran is not a rehash or a garbled version of the Bible:

(i) While commenting on Al-Baqarah 2:48, he recognises that it amounts to 'an implicit rejection of the Christian idea of

"vicarious atonement" and "intercession" by saints' (pp. 6 and 287).

(ii) Also, he perceptively notes that Al Imran 3:79 'rejects the notion that any prophet (and especially Jesus) was other than a human being' (p. 38).

(iii) In a similar vein he discerningly remarks that al-Nisa' 4: 157 constitutes 'a clear denial of Jesus's death.' However, he adds disparagingly: "[This is] surprising in light of the Quran's repeated accusation that the People of the Book typically "killed the prophets" (p. 60).

(iv) In his explanatory note on Ta Ha 20: 122 which recounts Allah's forgiveness of Adam's sin, he acknowledges: "The Christian doctrine of "original sin" is as foreign to the Quran as it is to the Jewish Bible." (p. 204).

(v) Insightfully, he remarks that in Islam an 'animal is ritually slaughtered, it is not sacrificed to "feed God," in contrast to most sacrificial systems in the ancient world, including that of the Bible' (p. 217).

However, his insinuation about the Quran's unacknowledged borrowing from the Bible, betrays the Orientalist streak in him. For he states that 'the description of God's light upon light in al-Nur 24:35 may be based on a description of the lighted altar of a Christian Church; Cf. John 8.12; 9.39. The quality of Droge's translation of the Quran text is fairly good and largely faithful to the original. However, in view of its numerous censorious comments on the authenticity of the Quran text and its castigation of the meaning and message of the Quran, this work can hardly serve as a 'resource' or as a 'text suitable for use in an academic setting' (Preface p. vii).

Publication details of the first edition:
Sheffield, UK, Equinox, 2014, pp. 488. ISBN: 9781845539450

109
Howk, Jason Criss
The Quran: A Chronological Modern English Interpretation
(2017)

It is a distinctly different, nay unusual English translation of the Quran by a Western author of our time on the following counts: i) Down the ages such ventures have been taken by academia trained in Quranic studies or church fathers. The translation under review is by a retired US Army Major, Afghanistan war veteran. ii) Most of the Western scholars have followed the received Surah order in their rendering. It is an article of Islamic faith that Prophet (peace be upon him) had received in full Allah's final message, the Quran revealed piecemeal over 23 years in Makkah and Madina through the agency of the archangel Jibrail and compiled it under divine instruction. Among the English translators the following standout for wreaking havoc upon the Surah order in their futile, pointless attempt to rearrange the Quranic text chronologically: J.M. Rodwell (1861), Richard Bell (1937-1939) and N.J. Dawood (1956). Significantly enough, in his 1990 revised edition, the Jewish translator, Dawood recanted his diffident stance on the Surah order and restored the divinely ordained one. Howk has gone to absurd lengths in trying to follow the chronological order of Surahs. He is so fastidious on this count that he has indicated those verses which were revealed in Madina but form part of Makkan Surahs and *vice versa*. It is a wild goose chase which takes readers nowhere. iii) Unlike most of his predecessors and contemporaries, Howk is not virulently anti-Islam. He displays a genuine, sincere effort to understand Islam and urges his readers to shed some of their misconceptions and misperceptions about Islam. It is gratifying that he does not repeat the Orientalists' parrot cry that the Quran is a poor replica of the Bible, lacking in any originality. At least, he recounts the Muslim belief about the divine origin of

the Quran. In his own words: "I seek a middle ground here. My sole intent is to show people what is and what is not in the Quran." He is alive to this deplorable menace of Islamophobia: "…many translations or analyses of the Quran are done by non-Muslims that seek to find fault in the messages of the Quran or vilify the entire religion of Islam." (p.20) It is his noble aim to bust some "myths about the Quran and Islamic culture." (p.21). He nonetheless, harbours some whimsical notions. Here are some instances in point: a) All Quranic Surahs except Surah Al-Tawbah, commence with *basmalah*. However, he abruptly and unjustifiably states: "Nor do I begin every chapter with the recitation in the name of Allah, the all-beneficence, the all merciful." (p.24). He claims to have "provided limited notes in the text of the Quran" (p.24). First, I could not locate any of these. Moreover, the standard practice is to append annotations, not to interpolate any extra-Quranic material into the body of the translation of the Quranic text. Although his description of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is, on the whole, free from the errors of perspective common to Orientalists, he falls into the Orientalist trap of discrediting the Madinan phase of the Prophet's career, alleging: "The message he shared started to change once he arrived in Medina and moved into a political and military leadership position." (p.30). This also carries the insinuation of Prophet's authorship of the Quran. He denies the existence of the complete written version of the Quran in the Prophet's life. This is factually incorrect. The Quran was preserved on parchment by Companions, widely recited in daily prayers and memorized by many. This much is no doubt, true that its codified copies had been sent to major Muslim towns by Caliph Uthman (RA) at a later date. He shares the Orientalists' distrust of Hadith and Sunnah as authentic sources of Islam (pp.29-30). His earnest desire to comprehend true Islam, nonetheless, shines through his piece, "Why do I care about Islam and the Quran?" His denunciation of some mindless terrorists who abuse the message of the Quran and Islamic symbols in their wanton violence is legitimate. For his twenty years' study of Islam and the Quran led him to conclude that the Quran stands for forgiveness, kindness, fairness, love, humility, charity, conscientiousness, mutual respect,

affection and cordial relations, regardless of the labels of religion, colour or ethnicity. (pp.33-34).

He is, however, reckless in translating the Quranic text, as he takes unpardonable liberty in trimming, clipping and abridging Quranic verses. His translation of verses 4 and 6-7 of Surah Al-Fatihah is not faithful to the original. (p.39) In only 5 short sentences he has conveyed incompletely the sense of the last II verses of Al-Alaq. Likewise, far from offering an accurate translation of Quranic verses, he compresses their meaning in a few words, passing it off as his interpretation. Take the following as illustrative: verses 17-27 of Al-Qalam (p.41) and 8-25 of Al-Muddaththir (p.46).

A remarkable feature of his work is his identification and analysis of the major concepts in the Quran. While faith related terms are mentioned thousands of times, war and jihad occur only occasionally. He highlights this in order to persuade his American readers that Islam and the Quran do not consist of only war cry and bloodshed. Notwithstanding some serious flaws, this work is to be welcomed for being a sincere, well meaning attempt to project Islam/the Quran positively before Western readers by a US Army officer who spent his life time in interacting with Muslims in Afghanistan.

Publication details of the first edition:
Old Stone Press, Kentucky, 2017. pp.550. ISBN: 978-1-938462-30-6

110
McAuliffe, Jane
The Quran
(2017)

The "Norton Critical Edition" by Jane McAuliffe, who has also edited the relatively recent Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an, defies typology. For, this supposedly critical edition does not explicate any of the events, personalities, geo-historical allusions, terms, concepts or anything Qur'anic. It is not her translation of the Qur'an either. Rather, it is a slightly rephrased version of the celebrated British Muslim, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's in modern English. She has replaced some archaic expressions in Pickthall's translation of 1930, as for example, "thou, thine, thy" etc, with "you, yours and your." Yet, Pickthall's name does not appear in the title or subtitle of this "critical edition." More intriguing is the subtitle of the work: "A Revised Translation, Origin, Interpretations and Analysis, Sounds, Sights, and Remedies, the Quran in America." The subtitle leaves so many unanswered questions: Whose revised translation is it? Is the work about Qur'an scholarship only in America? Is her book or the Revised Translation about the origin, sounds, sights and remedies of the Qur'an? Titles and subtitles are meant to guide readers, not to leave them perplexed and confused.

That McAuliffe rests content with presenting a nominally revised version of Pickthall's translation is a blessing in disguise. Had she produced a new translation, it may have abounded in the trappings peculiar to the Orientalists, of which her own edited Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an and the recent Orientalist translations by Alan Jones (2007) and A. J. Droge (2014) are illustrative. Rather, she deserves credit for having selected for her critical edition a translation which is representative of the authentic Muslim understanding of the Qur'an.

It is nonetheless bewildering that McAuliffe has spent her time and energy on rehashing Pickthall's version in modern English,

something already competently achieved by Arafat K. El-Ashi in 1996. El-Ashi's title clearly states that he has 'Revised and Edited in Modern Standard English Pickthall's translation' (Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications, 1996, ISBN: 9780915957231). The following examples, taken at random from McAuliffe's and El-Ashi's versions indicate that the former does not excel the latter in any respect in representing Pickthall's original in modern, standard English.

Rather, she appears to replicate almost what El-Ashi had accomplished twenty-one years ago:

- Allah has not assigned unto any man two hearts within his body, nor has He made your wives whom you declare (to be your mothers) your mothers, nor has He made those whom you claim (to be your sons) your sons. This is but a saying of your mouths. But Allah says the truth and He shows the way. (Surah al-Ahzab 33: 4, El-Ashi, p. 398)
- God has not assigned to any man two hearts within his body, nor has He made your wives whom you declare (to be your mothers) your mothers, nor has He made those whom you claim (to be your sons) your sons. This is only a saying of your mouths. But God says the truth and He shows the way. (McAuliffe, p. 223)
- These are the revelations of the Scripture that makes plain. It may be that you torment yourself (O Muhammad) because they believe not. If We will, We can send down on them from the sky a portent so that their necks would remain bowed before it. (Surah al-Shuara' 26: 2-4. El-Ashi, p. 341)
- These are the revelations of the scripture that makes plain. It may be that you torment yourself (O Muhammad) because they do not believe. If We will, We can send down on them from the sky a sign so that their necks would remain bowed before it. (McAuliffe, p. 193)
- And (remember) when Moses said unto his people: "O my people! Why hurt you me, when you well know that I am

Allah's Messenger unto you?" So when they went astray Allah sent their hearts astray. And Allah guides not the evil-living folk. (Surah al-Saff 61: 5. El-Ashi, p. 560)

- And (remember) when Moses said to his people: "O my people! Why do you persecute me, when you know well that I am God's messenger to you?" So when they went astray God sent their hearts astray. And God does not guide the evil-living people. (McAuliffe, p. 302)
- Say: He is Allah, the One! Allah, the eternally Besought of all! He begets not nor was begotten And there is none comparable unto Him. (Surah al-Ikhlas, 112: 1-4, El-Ashi, p. 692)
- Say. He is God, the one! God, the eternally besought of all! He begets not nor was begotten And there is none comparable to Him. (McAuliffe, p. 348)

Equally inexplicable on McAuliffe's part is her omission of the following valuable material in Pickthall's original edition-the foreword which places his venture in the context of the history of English translations of the Qur'an; his extensive introduction of around 20 pages which offers an insightful elucidation of the Prophet Muhammad's illustrious life and mission, his vindication of the received arrangement of the Qur'an, and his helpful Index of Qur'anic Legislation. The excision of such useful material runs counter to the spirit of a "critical edition." Worse, she has included material which has nothing to do with Pickthall's rendering or even with the Qur'an, as for example the section: "Pharmacology and Fortune-Telling" (pp. 583-595). The section on "The Quran in America" (pp. 627-640) carries two significant pieces: i) the heart-rending account of a Muslim slave from Senegal, Omar ibn Said (ca 1770-1864) and his excellent translation of Surah al-Mulk and ii) The American founding father and the third President of the US, Thomas Jefferson's study of the Qur'an. However, it is beyond one how, at least, the following two major works escaped McAuliffe's attention in this section on

the Qur'an in America: a) The Muslim convert, scholar T. B. Irving's (1914-2002) The Quran: The First American Version (1985) and b) Sandow Birk's American Quran (2015). Bruce B. Lawrence has focused much on the latter in his latest book, The Koran in English (2017). Her other omission is the recent scholarly evaluative study of Pickthall, including his Qur'an translation, Marmaduke Pickthall: Islam and the Modern World edited by Geoffrey P. Nash (Leiden, Brill, 2017).

Likewise, McAuliffe has failed also to mention in her bibliography the following significant works on Pickthall's Qur'an translation: (i) Ali, Shah Salim, "Misrepresentation of Some Ellipted Structures in the Translations of the Quran by A. Y. Ali and M. M. Pickthall," Hamdard Islamicus, 17: 4, 1994, pp. 1-18; (ii) Ansari, Iqbal Husain, Corrections of Errors in Pickthall's English Translation of the Glorious Quran. Karachi, Pakistan, 1991; (iii) Greifenhagen, F. V., "Traduttore Traditore: An Analysis of the of the History of English Translations of the Quran, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 14:3, 2003, pp. 249-263; (iv) Kidwai, Abdur Raheem," Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's English Translation of the Quran (1930): "An Assessment in Marmaduke Pickthall: Islam and the Modern World" (Leiden, Brill, 2017, pp. 231-247; v). Robinson, Neal, "Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Quran," Islam and Christian Muslim Relations, 8:3, 1997, pp. 261-278. Her bibliography of translations of the Qur'an (p. 641) is woefully thin. Of the 140 complete English translations on record, she refers to only 11. The absence of any mention of the following two major bibliographies of the Qur'an also strikes a jarring note:

- Karimi-Nia, Morteza, Bibliography of Quranic Studies in European Languages. Qum, Iran, Centre for Translation of the Holy Quran, 2012, and
- Tadros, Fawzi Mikhail, The Holy Koran in the Library of Congress: A Bibliography. Washington, Library of Congress, 1993.

As to McAuliffe's own annotations, rather interpolations, in Pickthall's version, these number around 150 and fall into two main categories. But first a word about this reprehensible practice of inserting material in a posthumous work: since Pickthall did not express any such views, why should these appear in a work attributed to him? Regrettably, instances of such posthumous revision have been fairly common in the field of English translations of the Qur'an. Some other instances in point are the revised, rather sanitized, posthumous versions of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, S. V. Mir Ahmad Ali and Sher Ali.

Let us revert to McAuliffe's own annotations in Pickthall's work. Around 20 of these seek to locate thematically identical passages in the Qur'an and the Bible.. (pp. 8, 9, 11, 66, 71, 79, 80, 83, 87, 117, 120, 151, 161 and 240). However, she does not elaborate on the common ground between these two major scriptures. She rests content with citing only Biblical references. Some of her explanatory notes, however, betray her Orientalist mind-set. In as many as five instances, she has superimposed the typical Shifah interpretations on Qur'anic verses, which was never the intent of Pickthall (pp. 48, 58, 61, 62 and 240). Of these, the most glaring one is the interpretation of the Qur'anic allusion to the young Ishmael's sacrifice intended by the Prophet Abraham, referred to in Verse 107 of Surah al-Saffat. However, her note reads: 'Shi'i commentators have understood it as a reference to the sacrifice of Husayn, Muhammad's grandson at Karbala (680 CE)' (p. 240). Her other controversial assertion is: 'Muslim scholars have debated whether Iblis was a fallen angel or a jinn (an invisible being for whom salvation is possible)' (p. 7). First, the idea of "the fallen angel" is totally alien to Islam. The Qur'an declares categorically that Satan was a jinn (Surah al-Kahf 18:50). Again, Satan's salvation has not been a topic of debate among Muslim scholars. Her rendering of (abd as a servant, in place of Pickthall's preferred choice of "slave" Is unacceptable (p.6). Of a similar import is her assertion that the meaning of the Qur'anic term sibghah (Surah Al-Baqarah 2: 138)- has

remained elusive for Muslim scholars (p.15). Not unsurprisingly, she interprets verse 34 of Surah al-Nisa' in terms of 'male superiority' (p.46). In a similar vein, she construes metaphorically the turning of some sinners into apes and swine (p. 62). On the authority of another Orientalist, Richard Bell, she expresses reservations about the Qur'anic assertion that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is described in the Torah and the Gospel. (p. 87). More sinister is the identification of "the sword verse" and the nexus between the Qur'an and violence (p. 97). Her reliance on Isra'iliyyat (tendentious reports in the Bible about the Messengers of Allah) is to the fore in her accusation that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) 'took Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, as one of his wives' (p. 243). In doing so, she re-echoes the bizarre character assassination of Prophet David (peace be upon him) in chapters 11 and 12 of 2 Samuel in the Old Testament. Brazenly, she does so in the face of the incontrovertible fact that the Qur'an portrays all messengers as persons of unblemished character and conduct. In sum, her authorial comments have nothing in common with Pickthall's understanding of the Qur'an which is marked by his unflinching loyalty to the viewpoint of the Ahl Al-Sunnah wa Al-Jama'ah.

McAuliffe's work falls much short of the standard expected of a critical edition. The only redeeming feature is her selection of Pickthall's version for the prestigious Norton series. For, Pickthall's translation stands out above many other translations of his predecessors and contemporaries. This work by a native. English-speaking Muslim has admirably served the cause of the Qur'an for almost a century. The present Norton edition will give it a further lease of life.

Publication details of the first edition:
New York, W.W. Norton, 2017, pp. 644, ISBN: 9780393927054

111
Reyonlds, Gabriel Said
The Quran and the Bible: Text and Commentary
(2018)

Until the early 20th century, translating the Qur'an into English, or other modern European languages, was the exclusive preserve of Orientalist scholarship. The enterprise was, in general, indisputably polemical and derogatory even if it deemed itself 'critical.' The English reading public could familiarize itself with the Qur'anic message and teachings only through the ideologically slanted and theologically sectarian versions produced by George Sale (1734), J. M. Rodwell (1861), E. H. Palmer (1880) and Richard Bell (1937-1939). However, the scene has now refreshingly changed. Today English-speaking readers can draw upon reliable and reader-friendly translations in the chaste and accessible Idiom of the day. Not only do these translations cogently and energetically bring out the meaning and message of the Qur'an, they also help readers relate the Qur'anic guidance to the issues of our times, brought into high relief by the forces and ideologies of modernity, that range from pluralism to gender parity, globalization and discrimination of Muslim minorities in secular nation-states, interfaith accord and, of course, terrorism.

Although the two above mentioned renderings of the Qur'an by the two leading Western scholars, Reynolds and Jane McAuliffe promise much; the former claiming to conflate thematically the Qur'an with the Bible and the latter offering, somewhat overbearingly in my opinion, "a critical edition" of the Qur'an, both of them leave a lot to be desired. Whatever may distinguish them from previous Orientalist efforts, these works do manage to resurrect a whole range of medieval misconceptions and misperceptions about Islam and the Qur'an. As such, they belong

to the unending tradition of sectarian polemics that is the hallmark of Western scholarship on the Qur'an.

The Quran and the Bible by Gabriel S. Reynolds, Professor of Islamic Studies and Theology, University of Notre Dame, reinforces the emergence of two trends in the Western scholarship on the Qur'an. The present study underscores, like The Quran with References to the Bible by Safi Kaskas and David Hungerford (2016), a significant shift away from the aggressively confessional perspectives which deny outright any originality to the Qur'an and its claim to be the scripture for all mankind. For these dismiss the Qur'an perfunctorily as a gross, poor replica of the Judaeo-Christian scriptural tradition. Illustrative of this centuries-old Western "plagiarism" thesis are the following studies: Abraham Geiger's Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen (What has Muhammad taken from Judaism?) (1833) and Heinrich Speyer's Die biblischen Erzahlungen im Quran (1937). However, Mohar Ali's brilliant critique, The Quran and the Orientalists (2004) refutes cogently this baseless charge of borrowings in the Qur'an. It is therefore refreshing to note Reynolds promising to provide 'a new lens through which to view the powerful links that bind' Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the same, though more emphatic, vein is his prefatory note: 'In the present work Bible and Quran are brought together. This work is meant to be a contribution to our understanding of the Quran by bringing to light its conversation with Biblical literature… the Quran alludes to and develops earlier traditions. My conviction… is that the Quran is an original work in literary and religious terms, but also a work which depends heavily on its audience's knowledge of the Bible and the traditions which developed out of the Bible' (p. 2).

The other trend typified by this work is somewhat strange, rather incomprehensible. In her Norton Critical edition, The Quran (2017), far from offering her own translation, McAuliffe modifies the earlier, but well-known, translation of Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930) before inserting her own annotations. This hybrid text is thus neither Pickthall's nor McAuliffe's own translation of

the Qur'an. Reynolds, too, does not present his own translation of the Qur'an. Instead, he rests content with reproducing Ali Quli Qaral's (2004), followed by his scholarly comments which of course do not have their origin in Qarai's work.

Reynolds's choice of Qarai's translation is regrettable on more than one count. First, Qarai's is a Shi[ah version, as evident from his many references to the distinctive Shi[ah beliefs and concepts in the index, where he cites Qur'anic verses in an attempt to justify Shi[ah doctrines in the Qur'anic text. It is nonetheless satisfying that Reynolds has not included this Index in the present work. Moreover, Qarai's translation is vitiated by the injudicious use of the Biblical term 'Apostle' for the Qur'anic rasul and nabi, which is retained in the present work. Furthermore, Qarai's is a somewhat less reader-friendly rendering owing to his use of unusual expressions, such as God-wariness, abstemiousness, baseborn, impugnation, etc.

Reynolds's study opens on an enigmatic note, acknowledging that the Qur'an 'has consciously reshaped Biblical material to advance its own religious claims' (p. 3). It is, however, a great pity that this point is not developed. Rather, throughout the focus has been placed on such Biblical passages which reinforce the borrowing, if not plagiarism, thesis. Take his following comments as illustrative:

1. 'The Quran transfers the imagery associated with Jerusalem to Mecca' (p. 70);
2. 'The idea that a woman should suckle her children for two years (31:14) has a basis in the Talmud' (p. 92);
3. (The Qur'an) 'follows the usage of the Aramaic texts which speak of God's shekinta' (p. 96);
4. 'Verse 249 of Al-Baqarah about Saul and Goliath is not the only case of the Quran transferring (or mixing) Biblical traditions' (p. 97); e. 'Verses 250-251 of Al-Baqarah: The Quran follows here the narrative of 1 Samuel' (p. 97);

5. ‘Verse 255 of Al-Baqarah (Ayah Al-Kursi): Noldeke-Schwally (History, 1, 84) argue that this verse might be a translation of a Jewish or a Christian hymn’ (p. 99);
6. ‘2:259: As in the previous verse, the Quran here uses a narrative from Biblical tradition’ (p. 101);
7. ‘2:261-265: In these verses, the Quran seems to build upon the gospel parable of the sower’ (p. 103);
8. ‘3:33: The Quran thus conflates the two Marys… The conflation is likely a confusion.. (p. 114);
9. ‘3:35-36: The Quran closely follows here the Protoevangelium of James, a Greek Christian work’ (p. 115).

Reynolds’s work teems with statements of similar import, which portray the Qur’an in poor light in terms of its originality and uniqueness. His stance on the authorship of the Qur’an is equally enigmatic, though, unlike other Orientalists, he does not brazenly speak of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the author of the Qur’an: ‘… readers will find me referring in the present work neither to what God says nor to what Muhammad says, but simply to what the Quran says’ (p. 15). However, in denying the status of the Word of God to the Qur’an, he leaves the important question unanswered: how did the Qur’an then come into being? For, he cites in this study 1500 references to the Bible which have their parallel in the Qur’an. What is more bewildering is that he quotes around 200 post-Biblical, pre-Qur’an works which in his opinion are the likely source of hundreds of Qur’anic narratives, concepts and terms. According to Reynolds himself, ‘… neither the Bible nor other Jewish and Christian texts were available in Arabic at the time of the Quran’s origins’ (p. 3). The glaring question therefore is: who in early 7th century Makkah/Madinah accomplished this mind-boggling scholarly and editorial feat of drawing upon hundreds of sources in Aramaic, Ethiopic, Greek, Syriac, and other languages and produced an altogether original work?

Occasionally, Reynolds points out how the Qur’an differs from the Bible, but only in finer details, as for example, in the story of the

Prophet Joseph (pbuh) and other places (pp. 354, 361-386, 437-438, 474, 596). This lacklustre exercise fails to highlight any distinctive feature of the Qur'an as the final divine message for humanity for eternity. Moreover, it is regrettable that notwithstanding his enviably thorough famillarity with both the Biblical and Qur'anic texts, Reynolds passes in silence over hundreds of instances in which the Qur'an radically departs from, rather emphatically refutes, the Bible on doctrinal grounds and legislative matters. In the absence of such discussion, Reynolds' study appears to be lopsided, leaving this distinct impression that the Qur'an merely re-echoes, if not Imitates, the Bible. Of course, there is much common ground between the Bible and the Qur'an, especially about moral precepts and the narratives about earlier Prophets. This common ground must be highlighted for promoting peaceful co-existence between the adherents of the three major world faiths. However, this exercise should not obfuscate the distinctive features of each scripture. Recounted below are only a few illustrations out of hundreds of such examples in which the Qur'an sharply and substantially departs from the Bible, a point altogether ignored in Reynolds's study:

1. i) Verse 102 of Surah Al-Baqarah exonerates the Prophet Solomon (pbuh) from the charge of idolatry which is levelled against him in the Biblical book 1 Kings, Old Testament, Chapter 'Solomon's Fall'; ii) Verse 115 of Surah Al-Baqarah denounces the practice of 'directionworship' prevailing among the early Christians; iii. Verse 22 of Surah Al-Baqarah refutes the Biblical notion of Heaven as the dwelling place of God, described in Psalms 11:4 and 33:13 and 14; The Muslim World Book Review, 39:4, 2019, 9
2. The Qur'anic concept of God is set in sharp contrast to the Biblical one (Joshua 24:19) as according to the Qur'an, He is neither jealous and vindictive nor inclined favourably towards a singular ethnic group (read Israelites);
3. The Qur'an holds both Adam and Eve guilty, and not Eve alone, of having eaten from the forbidden tree;

4. All the Qur'anic laws related to war, divorce, inheritance, menstruation, retribution, and major sins are markedly different from the Biblical ones. The egalitarian spirit of Islamic laws has gone totally unnoticed in Reynolds's study;
5. Unlike the Bible (John 18:36), the Qur'an asks the believers to seek what is good in both this life and the next. The Bible is, however, concerned only about the Afterlife;
6. The Bible forbids usurious loans only to fellow Israelites, not to others.
7. Contrary to this, the Qur'an forbids usury in absolute terms; ix. Reynolds levels the charge of anachronism against the Qur'an regarding Pharaoh's threat to the magicians who had embraced true faith, of crucifying them, saying that 'crucifixion was not yet known in Ancient Egypt' (p. 272); However, several Western scholars are on record, reporting the incidence of this practice in ancient Egypt: T. H.
8. Horne (1858), D. W. Chapman (2008), W. Barclay (1998), M. E. Adams (2009), and S. Bates (2007);
9. Reynolds is alive to the difference in the Qur'anic and Biblical accounts of the People of the Cave. However, he attributes it to the Qur'an's 'anti-Christian theological mission' (p.451). More strikingly, he does not say a word about the Qur'an's rejection of such basic Christian doctrines as the trinity, original sin and monasticism;
10. A polemical note is to the fore in his branding verses 35-36 of Surah Maryam as 'anti-Christian' (p. 480);
11. The Qur'an exonerates the Prophet Aaron from the Biblical charge of collusion with the Israelites in the worship of the golden calf and holds the Samiri solely responsible for it. Far from appreciating this Qur'anic sensitivity, Reynolds notes in this Qur'anic stance a 'Jewish anti-Samaritan sentiment' (p. 496);

12. He identifies the Qur'anic figure, Dhu al-Qarnayn, with Alexander the great (p. xvii). By doing so, he disregards the divergence of opinion among Muslim scholars on the exact identity of this figure; xiv. His one line introduction to the Prophet Job (pbuh) that the Qur'an commanded him to 'reprimand his wife' (p. xviii) is not true to the 10 The Muslim World Book Review, 39:4, 2019
13. Qur'anic account which focuses on his exemplary patience and repentance.

In sum, Reynolds's study leaves the impression that the Qur'an owes its existence to the Biblical tradition. Nowhere, does it acknowledge the Qur'an's originality in terms of its fundamental differences with the Bible on doctrinal, legislative and many other issues.

Publication details of the first edition:

New Haven, Yale University Press, 2018, pp. 1008. ISBN: 9780300181326

112
Williams, Emma
The Quran
(2020)

Amid around 150 complete English translations of the Quran, published from 1649 to 2021, Emma William's holds the unenviable distinction of being the most reckless, bizarre and totally untrustworthy translation. This "self-publication," available in both print and kindle editions, has wreaked havoc upon the Quranic text. Literally almost every page of this 445 pages translation is disfigured by such blunders and howlers which are unimaginable, particularly in the context of such a holy book as the Quran which is revered by every Muslim.

It is a highly unusual, nay outrageous book in every sense of the word. It begins abruptly, without any contents page, preface or introduction and, without any explanatory notes on the Quran. The foot note numbers appear superimposed on the text, but not a single note is provided.

That it distorts the Quranic text and renders it almost unintelligible and unrecognizable for English speaking readers is evident from the following instances:

It is downright deplorable that some Surah titles have been rendered, which evoke contempt for the translator and betray her colossal ignorance of the Quranic terminology and idiom, and the rich tafsir tradition. Surah 7, Al-Anfal (Spoils of war) is translated as "The Loot" (p. 173); Surah 15, Al-Hijr as "Hedjr" (p. 173); Surah 19, Maryam as "Maria" (p. 206); Surah 20, Ta Ha as "TA. HE. HAS" (p. 210); Surah 35 Fatir as "Los Angeles" (p. 299); Surah 36 Ya Sin as "Already Without" (p. 303); Surah 52 Al-Tur as "Mount Sinai" (p. 368), Surah 55 Al-Rahman as "The Mercy" and Surah 106 Quraysh as "Koreichitas" (p. 442). Some of Emma's

Surah captions as “TA. HE. HAS,” “Los Angeles” and “Already Without” are mind boggling.

Worse, nay insane is her meaningless translation of hundreds of Quranic verses. Readers are left wondering as to how they can take it as the Word of God. Some glaring instances are as follows. Readers’ attention is drawn in particular to the italicized portions of her translation:

1. Shame before God and the terrible punishment *aclan. ZARAN criminals* as a reward for his deceptions. (A-An’am 6: 124, p. 93).
2. God leads towards that light which wants and intends *to parabo men’s,* because he knows everything. (Al-Nur 24: 35, p. 241).
3. *Acusaron Hud imposture* and we will *exterminates mos*. (Al-Shu’ara 26: 139, p. 255)
4. … these *jardi laughing purposes* because not ye *that ye forth their trees*), is a *god company* (Al-Naml 27: 61, p. 263).
5. *Perhaps* God said, *diri toured* the straight path. (Al-Qasas 28: 21, p. 267).
6. God pours handfuls on *who Quie re* or *distributed to some extent*. (Al-Qasas 28: 82, 272).
7. Those who believe in what is false in *August* and do not believe in God, those are *desgraciated*. (Al-’Ankabut 29: 52, p. 277).
8. *The day time*, has reached *five* criminals *becomes mute shall*. (Al-Rum 30: 11, p. 279).
9. We will *uni we to* you through marriage, so it is not for *creyen tes* a crime to marry. (Al-Ahzab 33: 37, p. 292).
10. You *excitaremos* against them to *extermi narlos* (Al-Ahzab 33: 60, p. 293).
11. We could make them swallow *the tie RRA a jar* (Saba 34: 9, p. 295).

12. *Decretarnos 13*. And when he died, was *reptile tie RRA* who communicated to all; had gnawed his stick *sos had the cadaver*. (Saba 34: 13, p. 296).

13. *Oh men*! Remember the benefits that you have *col Mado God*. (Fatir 35: 3, p. 299).

14. Each of these stars is continuing *its Carr era* to a fixed term. (Fatir 35: 14, p. 300).

15. And when they brought them before him, began *to desjarratarlos* and *cor Tarles head*. (Sa'd 38:32, p. 316).

16. Woe to those whose *cora zones* are hardened. (Al-Zumar 39: 23, p. 321)

17. Anyone who strays *detri strays in mento yours*. (Al-Zumar 39: 42 p. 322)

18. Except those whom God wants to let live; *then it touches a second time, all beings up right sitting RAN and wait.* (Al-Zumar 39. 68 p. 324.

19. … the God *Prune Rose* and wise. (Al-Mumin 40: 1, p. 325).

20. Has the mountains on its surface, *the bendeci has do* and distributed in the space of four days in *March* in proper certain *food tions that seeks also to all also ask*. (Fussilat 41: 9, p. 332).

21. The deities invoked once have *DESA resemblance before their eyes.* (Fussilat 41: 48, p. 335).

22. HA. MIM. AIN. *WITHOUT*. KAF. (Al-Shura 42: 1, p.336).

23. We have given the revelation in *book Arabic*, in order to warn the mother of cities *in March*, … day in that part of men in *Re* in heaven and another in the brazier of hell. (Al-Shura 42: 5, p. 336).

24. This is how *VOSO* will *be thers resurrected too*. (Al-Zukhruf 43: 10, p. 341).

25. *ELI will one above another*. (Al-Zukhruf 43: 31, p. 342).

26. Pharaoh made a proclamation to his people saying: *O PUE my blo!* (Al-Zukhruf 43: 50, p. 343).
27. God is the Forgiving, *the Mise ricordiose*. (Al-Ahqaf 46: 7, p. 352).
28. I *Vuel* to you and I'm from *ninuero* of those who resign themselves to your will." (Al-Ahaqaf 46: 14, p. 352).
29. *Suffer therefore be told*, the torture as *pre mio* of your unbelief (Al-Ahqaf 46: 33, p. 354).
30. O believers! If *you attend God* in their war against *malva two*, he will also attend. (Muhammad 47: 8, p. 355).
31. Do not deprive *Ra* of the prize of your doings. (Muhammad 47: 37, p. 357).
32. … and there are men among you who *is ava ros*; but the miser is only his detriment ... and if you *tergiversais*, he will raise another *pue blo* in your place, a people that will seem not. Xw. (Muhammad 47: 40, p. 358).
33. When the *war are two nations* of believers, *pro reconcile Heal*. (Al-Hujurat 49: 9, p. 362).
34. God will say. I had already *love Nazado* before this day. (Qaf 50: 27, p. 364).
35. He is the Lord of *Dog Days.* (Al-Najm 53:50, p. 372).
36. … *saber you will fall a rain of fire and bronze fun Dido*. (Al-Rahman 55: 35 p. 377).
37. You know the *primers creation*, why not reflect *xionais*? (Al-Waqi'a 56:62, p. 380).
38. Whoever *haysaesta* do among *mentrying* to *imps tors* the prophets. (Al-Waqiah 56: 91, p. 381).
39. Those who fight against God and His Messenger will *tr a queteados* (Al-Mujadalah 58:6, p. 385).

40. You disbelieved they *saliesen* and they thought their *forta lezas* protect them against God. (Al-Hashr 59: 3, p. 387).

It is beyond belief that hundreds of similar utterly incomprehensible renderings vitiate this work, of which the above only 40 instances have been quoted.

Equally atrocious is the use of such totally unintelligible expressions in this translation: "di Reccion (p. 2), ELIF. THE M. RA (p. 135), miseri Cordia (p. 145), ELIA LAM.RA (p. 173), SOther and Dhul Kamein (p. 203), IMPA (p. 202), desobe Decius (p. 217), Hubie (p. 217), slandered res (p. 239), his poor za (p. 241), sale jas (p, 265), Quie re (p. 272), conmoviese (p. 283), tie RRA (p. 286), EL Glorioso (p. 335) sor two blind (p. 356) respon Derra (p. 364) and IPOs ings (p. 371)."

No Index or Bibliography is appended to the work, what to speak of Glossary.

The only redeeming feature of the book is a brief introduction to the Quran on the back page of the work, which is refreshingly free from the Orientalist stance on authenticity or genuineness of the Quran. Rather, it states: "To the Muslims, the Quran is the Word of God and contains complete guidance for mankind."

This, however, does not and cannot absolve the translator, Emma William of her disregard for the sanctity of the Scripture in not having even attempted to render it in readable English. Her apathy towards the art and craft of translation, towards proof reading and presentation towards her readers and towards her own reputation cannot be condoned.

Details of the first edition:
mEmInc. pp.445 ISBN:9798682380787

PART – VI
BY OTHERS

113
Khalifa, Rashad
The Quran:The Final Scripture
(The Authorized Version)
(1978)

Born in Egypt, Rashad Khalifa (d.1988) emigrated to the US while he was young and served as Imam at a mosque in Tucson, Arizona. He shot into fame with his publications on Islam, particularly on the Quran which catered to popular taste and abounded in tall claims. His writings caught people's fancy. An illustration in point is his work. The Computer Speaks: God's Message to the World (Tucson, Arizona, USA, 1980). Its contents read as follows:

> Secret code of Quran decoded. Meanings of the Quran's mysterious letter unveiled. Verse by verse of the world. God reveals the exact time.

A work purporting to cover, rather resolve such tricky issues evoked a frentic response. While showing off his mastery over computer, which was new to the Muslim masses in 1980s, Khalifa managed to carve out a niche for himself as a computer expert who was grounded well in the Quran. His imposture was, however, exposed soon. Once his blasphemous views on the Quran, the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) and Hadith became public knowledge, he lost all his credibility. Here are some odious samples of his remarks on Hadith and Sunnah: "Hadith is no more than inventions by the enemies of the Prophet aimed at repelling the people from God's way and from the Quran." (p.347) "… a few centuries after the Prophet the scholars of Islam invented Hadith (oral) and Sunnah (traditions) to replace the Quran." (p. 499). In the last years of his life Khalifa was a thoroughly discredited person whose imposture had been exposed.

During the phase of his popularity as an Islamic scholar who had successfully employed computer technology for vindicating Islam's

eternal truth, Khalifa produced his English translation of the Quran. Projected as the "Authorized English Version," it claims to have discovered for the first time in history a built- in miracle, proving physically that the Quran is God's message. Mahmood Y. Abdullah identifies Khalifa's methodology:

> He claims that Alif-Lam- Mim itself took him four years to translate. He explains how. He wrote the Quran into computer, analyzed the whole text and used the time-share terminal to a giant computer. In this way he found the correlation among the Quranic initials and a deliberate mathematical system. After mathematically analyzing each initial in huruf al – muqattat, he concluded that "19 is Almighty Creator's signature on everything He created."[1]

Khalifa's work is premised on the so-called "numerical theory," asserting that the computer establishes the miraculous nature of the Quran. This claim uses the number19. And its multiples as the basis of its argument. By carrying out computer analysis of the given numerical value of various words and verses of the Quran, he shows that their numerical value revolves around the figure of 19. This particular figure was regarded as sacred in some old mythologies. In Muslim history this fanciful idea was propagated for the first time by a heretic, Baba Khurami, who was killed by his own followers in 223 H Bahaullah Mirza, the founder of Bahaism too, invested the figure of 19 with halo and sanctity. It is one of Bahai beliefs that the figure 19 is the centrally core of universe and also of the whole cosmic system.

Ironically, Khalifa who claimed to have established the authenticity of the Quran made this unwarranted assertion, on the basis of his flimsy number 19 theory that the last two verses of Surah al-Tawbah are forged ones. Khalifa who laments the errors and omissions in the existing English translations stands guilty of unpardonable and indefensible crime of rejecting certain verses of the Quran. Also, he had the audacity to claim that he was the Final

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[1] Mahmood Y. Abdullah, *Tampering with the Text and Meaning of the Quran*, Leicester, Academia Press, 2005, 40-41.

Messenger, as he dismissed Prophet Muhammad's finality. He stands guilty also of contesting the Quranic concept of intercessions. Equally loathsome is his Hadithophobia.

In the face of such sacrilege he was branded an apostate. However, for years he managed to beguile unsuspecting Muslims while riding on the wave of computer technology.

His translation, published first in 1978, was re-issued thrice up to 1981. However, as his malicious intentions came into light, his work was lost into oblivion. However, in the last decade, some of his followers have re-surfaced and his work has been reprinted several times by a little known publishing house in the US. In his brilliant analysis, Mahmood Y. Abdullah has refuted the nefarious designs of this group.[1] Soon after the publication of Khalifa's outrageous work, many Muslim scholars exposed his fallacious and flawed work, as listed below in "Other Reviews" of this piece.

Publication details of the first edition:

Tucson, Arizona, USA, The Spirit of Truth, 1978, 525 pages.

Number of Editions: 8

Other Reviews:

Ahmad, Anis, "The Miracle called Quran at the Mercy of Charlatans" *al- Ittehad*, 15: 2 (April 1978), 45-62

Denffer, A.V. "Review on the The Quran: The Final Scripture," *Muslim World Book* Review, 2:4(1982), 3-5

Dar al –Ifta, *Islamic Research Magazine* 9, (1404H).

Boullata, J., "Review on the Quran: The Final Scriptur," *Religious Studies Review*, 9 (1983), 189-199.

Philips, Bilal, *The Quran Numerical Miracle: Hoax and Heresy*, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, al- Furqan Publications, 1987. See also the Review on this work by S.M. Darsh, in the *Muslim World Book Review*, 10:3 (Spring 1990), 22 -23.

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[1] Ibid.

114
Pathan, M.A.K.
The Meaning of the Quran
(1993)

M.A.K. Pathan's The Meaning of the Quran is patently fallacious in both its conception and execution. Because of its outragenous attempt to present a garbled meaning and message of the Quran and of all things Islamic, this work does more of a disservice to the cause of the Quran.

First, the work is introduced as a 'non-fanatic' version of the Quran, dismissing all earlier ventures in the field, especially by scores of devout Muslim translators, as utterly worthless. As for the author's own credentials, one learns that by training he is a veterinary graduate who served in that capacity for 30 years in the Indian Army. More importantly, he has studied, the reader is told, as many as nine translations of the Quran in English and Indian regional languages! In view of this poor background, little wonder then that his work abounds in errors.

Here are some of Pathan's outrageous utterances which demonstrate complete disregard for even common sense:

1. The Quran is projected, or translated wrongly for many centuries (p.5)
2. Immediately after the Prophet's demise, in fact that very night, a fierce struggle began for the seat of power. It was the Prophet's senior companions versus his relatives. Over the decades they often fought among themselves and killed one another. A hundred years later, the compilers of Hadis appeared on the scene and also those four great Imams each of whom interpreted the religion in his own way (p. 15).
3. While compiling the Quran the editors placed the longer surahs dealing with the matters of this world at the beginning of the

Quran, and the shorter surahs that deal with the Hereafter, at the end (p. 16).

4. The verse of Surah al- Nisa (dealing with polygamy) is a welfare measure – an emergency measure – for such orphan girls. But translations quietly add the word 'other' to make it read that to avoid injustice to the orphan girls, you marry up to four other women and none of the orphan girls. (pp. 69-70).
5. Verse 152 of Surah al- An 'am is quoted against family planning. It can be stretched to cover abortions. But in surgery or medication there is no conception. Now you may say that this thwarts God's will of giving children. If so, you should always be with your wife, from puberty to senility; you never know when He will grant children. Actually, the Quran is not against limiting children (p. 78).
6. Verse 18 of Surah al- Momin: here and other places in the Quran it is said that the sinners will not have a shafi (intercessor). And good people need no shafi. Hence the shafi system (the institution of intercession) is useless (p.207).
7. Verses 1-5 of Surah al- Tahrim are with reference to an incident in which the Prophet prohibited for himself a thing decreed lawful by God. Many stories are in circulation to explain these verses. It indicates that the Prophet's life story is not known accurately (p.246)

As to Pathan's translation of the Quranic text, it is atrociously poor.

Publication details of the first edition:
Pune, India, Crescent Publications, 1993. 286 pages.

Number of Editions: 1

115
Ahmed, Shabbir
The Quran As It Explains Itself
(2001)

The author, Shabbir Ahmed, of Pakistani descent and a medical doctor, led his working life for decades in Saudi Arabia and gained proficiency in Arabic. However, his credentials and his Quran translation do not justify the tall claims he has made about the excellence of his work. Worse, without his adequate grounding in Islamic legacy he has condemned all non-Arab classical Muslim scholars, accusing them of being under the bad influence of Zoroastrian and Persian culture. (p.7). He contemptuously dismisses non-Arab doyens of *Tafsir*, *Hadith* and *Fiqh* as "Persian Imams" (p.7). For him, even Arabs "lost their touch with the Quran," with the ascendancy of non-Arab Islamic scholars. For pressing home the above point, without any scruples he uses such harsh, nay apocalyptic headings: "Why was mankind robbed of God's Final Revelation?" (p.7). Equally vehement is he in his condemnation of modern Arabic which, in his opinion of modern Arabic which, in his opinion, hampers the understanding of the Quran. With this exaggerated alarmist mindset he claims to have produced a faithful explanation of the Quran, which is actually a delusion on his part. He is too myopic in having rejected all *asbab al-nuzul* (circumstantial setting) reports about Quranic verses. Granted that the Quran is an eternal book of guidance, valid for all time and place, it is a piecemeal revelation spanning over 23 years, with a particular locale and spatio-temporal fixities. Certain events did trigger the revelation of some Quranic verses for mentoring the nascent Muslim community. These reports do not eclipse the eternal message of the Quran. A sense of moderation is to be observed in balancing the local and universal content and context in the Quran interpretation. His boasting about his focus on the langue of 7th century Makkah is not borne out by his faulty

exposition. For example, he defines the key Quranic term *salat* in a somewhat bizarre way: "To follow closely, like a runner up (Musalli) follows the winning horse (Saabiq); to follow Divine Commands." He misses altogether the primary meaning of prayer and worship while offering this lexical description. It takes readers nowhere. Equally outrageous is his definition of Jinn: "People rarely seen in towns. The nomads. When the Jinns or nomads urbanize, they are referred to as ins." (p.15) *Tasbeeh* (glorification of Allah) is misconstrued by him as "Swim with long strides." (p.16). For him Satan represents "Straying Ego" (p.22). Likewise, he speaks of Allah's anger as something figurative. In discussing miracles and matters pertaining to *al-ghayb* (what lies beyond the ken of man's sense perception) he imitates his predecessors, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Asad, Ahmad Ali and other apologetics.

Going a step further, he strips the key Islamic/Quranic terms of their true, sacred meaning. For him, establishing *salat* (prayer) stands for "the System in which Permanent moral values rule the hearts and minds of men and women. There are neither masters nor subjects in such a system… the 2.5 percent taking of annual charity is a non-Quranic concept that trivializes the comprehensive Quranic System of Zakaat." (pp.24 and 25).

Brazenly enough, Ahmad rules out how Allah routed in an exceptional way Abraha's army, intent upon destructing Kabah. He divests the relevant Quranic verses of the miracle: how birds pelted stones of baked clay which reduced the invading army to rubble. Instead, he follows the stance of Hameeduddin Farahi, Amin Ahsan Islahi and G.A. Parwez in mistranslating Verse 4 of Surah Al-Feel: "Then you [Makkans] showered them with hard stones earmarked with requital." (p.557). Equally fallacious is his rendering of Surah Al-Kawthar. Far from designating *Al-Kawthar* as a river gifted to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by Allah on Day of Judgement, he equates it with "the ever flowing stream of wisdom and knowledge in this Quran." Moreover, in Ahmed's opinion, the

Prophet's enemies instead of being lost into oblivion, as the Quran declares, "would be cut off from the Abundant Good." (p.561).

Like Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad, Ahmed does not subscribe to the Quranic idea of the physical joys and punishment in Paradise and Hell respectively. He interprets these figuratively as mere metaphors. His appendix, "Paradise and Hellfire" (pp.568-569) teems with their identification with "metaphors and allegories." (p.568). for him, advancements recorded in science and technology signify Allah's bliss or Paradise. Under the sway of such mistaken notions he pronounces this judgement: "Nations that fail to advance in science and technology fail to reach the Status of Adam. So they live a life "unlived," that of humiliation and misery… They Hell or Paradise of a person begins right here in this life... Jahannam [hell] is a metaphor for a stagnant existence with no development." (pp. 568-569).

In view of the unpardonable libery taken with the infallible Quranic text and the intrusion of unconvential Shariah- discordant views, this translation is untrustworthy for the reading public.

Details of the first edition:

Lauderhill, Florida, Dr Shabbir Ahmed. Pp.570. 2001.

116
Yuksel, Edip et al
The Quran: A Reformist Translation
(2007)

Edip Yuksel was born in 1957 in Turkey into a Kurdish family of Islamic scholars and activists. His brother, an Islamic activist was assassinated. In 1986 Yuksel abandoned Islamism and opted for the Quran Alone philosophy presented by the blasphemous Rashad Khalifa. Yuksel's pious father disowned him for being an apostate. Khalifa sponsored Yuksel's immigration to the US. Yuksel earned his degree in jurisprudence from the University of Arizona. He is known as a Kurdish American activist. United Submitters International, the outfit founded by Khalifa and endorsed by Yuksel, rejects Hadith and Sunnah. He has to his credit more than 20 books on religion, politics and philosophy in both English and Turkish.

The work under review, The Quran: A Reformist Translation translated and annotated by Yuksel, al- Shaiban and Schulte- Nafeh stands out as another addition to a strange, rather grossly atrocious breed of English translations of the Quran. Although such works are by persons bearing Muslim names, the latter attack Islam from within. Such authors undermine the credibility of Hadith, the Prophet's Companions, and of the glorious tradition of tafsir, as they betray total distrust of ulema and jurists. They dismiss the entire Hadith corpus as fabricated and hence worthless, and Hadith narrators, jurists and mufassirun as totally unreliable opportunists who were driven by lust for power and mercenary gains. Rashad Khalifa's The Quran: The Final Scripture (1993), Laleh Bakhtiar's The Sublime Quran (2007) and the present work.

The Quran: A Reformist Translation, however, surpasses its predecessors in its nefarious attempt to discredit the Sirah, Hadith,

the Prophet's Companinons and many things Islamic Yuksel and his team make no bones about their loathsome stance:

> Quran: A Reformist Translation… abandons the rigid preconceptions of all-male scholarly and political hierarchies that gave rise to a series of writings and teachings known as Hadith and and Sunna, which, according to the Quran itself, carry no authority… It this world is a continuation of the Quranic prophecy based on number 19. (p.10)

First, a word about the numerical code of 19, and its progenitor, Rashad Khalifa. Khalifa shot to fame with his book, The Computer Speaks: God's Message to the World (1980). Since computer technology was new at that time, he cast almost a spell on some unsuspecting Muslims, making them believe that he had decoded the numerical value of words in the Quranic text, discovering that these revolve around the figure of 19, held sacred in some ancient mythology. Earlier, in 230 AH an impostor, Babak Khurrami had propounded a similar theory about the numerical code of the Quran. Bahaullah Mirza, founder of Bahaism, also subscribed to this silly notion that the figure 19 is the central core of the universe, rather of the whole cosmic system.

The sheer absurdity of the above notion comes out in the translators' following note which does not explain why the figure 19 is important. Nor does it advance in any respect one's understanding of the Quran:

> Surah al- Infitar is the only chapter that ends with the word Allah (God) and it occurs in the 19th verse as the 19th occurrence from the end of the Quran. (al-Infitar 82:19).

Such gibberish reflecting the translators' awe for the figure 19 is reiterated throughout the work. Some instances in point are their explanatory notes on Surahs al- Sajdah, Ya Sin, Saad, Ghafir, Fussilat and al- Muddaththir. Here is their preposterous, rather, blasphemous claim:

> The All– Wise God, though He revealed the Quran to Muhammad about 14 centuries ago, kept its mathematical miracle as a gift to our time. Rashad Khalifa's computerized

> study gave its fruits in early 1974 by the discovery of the 14-century-old SECRET [sic].
>
> The number 19 is mentioned only in the 74th chapter of the Quran. Juxtaposing these two numbers yields 1974, exactly the year in which it was deciphered… If we multiply these two numbers 19 X 74, we end up with 1406, the exact number of lunar years between the revelation of the Quran and the discovery of the code. (al-Muddaththir 75:nn.1-2).

Such nonsense abounds in the work. Worse, the translators denigrate all that is sacred in Islam. Take as illustrative their derogatory remarks about the Prophet's Companions.

> Sahaba worship is one of the main teachings of Sunni sects. Sunnis refuse to criticize, let alone condemn, the murderers [of-Hussain and Hassan] who happened to be Muhammad's Companions. (al-Ahzab 33:n. 12).

The ulema are disparagingly dubbed as "bearded leeches" (al-Shura 42: n. 23) while the Caliphs are vilified as "Satanic." By contrast, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk is praised for promoting democracy: "the best system we have discovered" (al- Shura 42: n. 38).

As to their playing havoc with the meaning and message of the Quran, the following instances betray their morbidity:

i) Verse 158 of al- Baqarah states the simple fact that Safa and Marwah, the hillocks close to Kabah, are Allah's signs. This verse is, however, mistranslated thus: "The serenity and chivalry are amongst God's emblems."

ii) While twisting the meaning of Verse 13 of al- Ahzab the translators claim that the Prophet Solomon (peace and blessings be upon him) was an "art enthusiast." What is more shocking is that the ulema are charged with worshipping the black stone in Makkah and are derided for their "opposition to statues made for artistic purposes" (Saba' 34: n.13).

iii) Verse 1 of Surah Fatir speaks of angels with two, three or four pairs of wings. However, its garbled version appears thus in

this work: “God, maker of the angels as messengers with powers/dimensions in two’s three’s and four’s.”

iv) Strictures are passed against such a distinguished Messenger of God, as Prophet Abraham (peace and blessings be upon him):

> Abraham was wrong in literally interpreting the dream [about sacrificing his son, Ishmaell, since the dream was a metaphor… Had Abraham lived today and had he managed to sacrifice his son, according to God’s law, as society we should hold him responsibility for the murder. (al- Saffat 37: nn. 105-107).

v) Verse 4 of Surah Muhammad permits the beheading of the enemy in a battle. Its translation is, however, so distorted that it bears no affinity with the original: “so if you encounter those who rejected, then strike the control center until you have overcome them.” The translators unabashedly identify this verse as the driving force for the “Sunni and Shiite terrorists.” (Muhammad: 47: n. 4).

Numerous unpardonable liberties have been taken with the Quranic text at several places, by way of superimposing whimsical notions on the text and passing these off as the intended meaning of the Quran itself. Worse, the translators regard it as their achievement. For they cite other English translations in order to celebrate their departure from the existing translations of Pickthall and Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Unlike other Quran scholars, they do not think that verse 34 of al-Nisa suggests striking a rebellious wife. (pp. 17-20) Nor do they share the thrust of verse 38 of al-Maidah that a thief’s hands be cut off. For them, the verse only recommends that a thief be sent to a rehabilitation center. (p.21) About Jizyah, they inform their readers: “Jizyah as tax on non-Muslims was invented long after Muhammad to further the imperialistic agenda of kings” (p.22) Verse 5 of al- Tahrim spells out fasting as a virtuous trait of a Muslim woman, be she unmarried or married. The translators, following twisted rendering of this verse, make it hard to trace it back to the original Quranic text: “active in their societies, responsive and foremost ones.” (p.24)

Another detestable strand of the translator's stance is to project a muted role and function of a Messenger of God. Under the sway of this mistaken notion they mistranslate verse 44 of al-Nahl, which is followed by the following note carrying this obnoxious sub-heading: "Do we need Muhammad to understand the Quran?" Equally audacious is their comment: "We emphasized, once again that Surah al-Qiyamah 75:19) holds that God explains the Quran, and makes no mention of Muhammad" (pp.28 and 29).

Included in this work are eleven Appendixes. Of these, only a passing reference is made to some of their outrageous contents. In Appendix 10 one comes across this shocking assertion:

> Only three Prayers a day are mentioned by name in the Quran … there is no funeral Sala (Prayer)… some of the sectarian innovations are: adding extra prayers such as Sunnah and nawafil, prohibiting women from leading the prayers, while sitting, reciting a prayer at- Tabiyat, adding Muhammad's name to shahadah..(p.508).

No less scandalous are other Appendixes with these self-explanatory titles: Appendix 3: "On it is Nineteen" (pp. 413-424). Appendix 6: "Why Trash All the hadiths" (pp.487-490) and Appendix8: "Eternal Hell and Merciful?" (pp. 497-498) in which the eternality of Hell is denied.

Utterly offensive are the Endnotes, some of which smack of irreverence and even blasphemy:

a) Belief in intercession is a mythology… we are instructed to glorify and praise God, not His messengers who are only human beings like us.

   Uttering expressions containing salli ala after Muhammad's name … is based on a distortion… Sunni and Shiite clerics try hard to find an excuse to continue this form of Muhammad worship. A great majority of Sunni and Shiite mushriks declare their prayers, but immediately nullify that declaration twice while sitting down during Prayer by greeting the Prophet in the second person, "Peace be on you, o prophet" (as salamu alayka

ayyahun nabiyyu), as if he was another omnipotent and omniscient God. (Al-Baqarah: 2, n.48)

b) The Quran does not prohibit alcoholic beverages or drugs legally and thus does not suggest any punishment for mere usage of alcohol. Hadith books containing severe penalties for the consumption of alcohol contradict the Quranic jurisprudence [sic]. (Al-Baqarah: 2,219).

c) Menstruating women should continue their prayers, fasting and studying the Quran. Commentaries based on Hadith and the Sunnah, not only mistranslate the word taharah but also fabricate a list of prohibitions. (Al-Baqarah: 2, n.222).

d) Hadith narrators fabricated 'miracles' for Muhammad. Sunni and Shiite mushriks went ahead and added Muhammad's name next to God's in the most repeated declaration of faith, the shahadah, again in clear contradiction of many verses of the Quran. (Al-Baqarah, 2, n. 285).

Publication details of the first edition:

USA, Brainbow Press, 2007.520 pages, ISBN: 978097671500.

Number of Editions: 1

117
Dakdok, Usama
The Generous Quran
(2009)

What a travesty that this work entitled as *The Generous Quran* drips with sheer venom against Islam/Quran/Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on every page: This work by an Egyptian Christian missionary, and a globe trotting hate preacher conjures up the image of Islam as the most menacing threat to mankind, which is more dangerous than even a nuclear bomb. Brazenly enough, he resurrects all the unfounded Medieval prejudices against Islam: violence, debauchery and fraud. Even the "Dedication" pours toxic Islamophobia, as it condemns Islam/Muslims for the deplorable 9/11 terrorism, and for the *en masse* conversion of Egypt into a Muslim land consequent upon the genocide, rape and destruction of local Christians. His objective behind authoring this work is to warn mankind against "the falsehood contained in the Quran… in the hope of salvation offered to them through the Bible in the person of Jesus Christ" (p.9). R. Lee's "Introduction" (pp.11-14) elaborates on Dakdok's denunciation of Islam, as it reiterates the Orientalists' inflammatory charges: Islam spread by sword and the Quran is permeated with "intolerance, violence, subjugation of women, polygamy and domination of all religions." (p.12) In his "Introduction" Dakdok harps maliciously at the unacknowledged Biblical borrowing in Islam/Quran. In his zeal to project the Quran as a despicable replica of the Bible, he alleges that "many words in the Quran are without any meaning." (p.16) and its vocabulary comprises mostly "non-Arabic words" (pp.580-650). He attempts to demolish the Quran with reference to its feature of abrogation while rejecting the integrity of the Quranic text and assailing the wisdom of its author, Allah.

Here are some of this loathsome remarks seeking to discredit Islam/Quran in every possible way:

- Verse 1 of Surah Al-Fatihah indicates that Muslims worship Satan. (p.23)
- Al-Baqarah 2:30-40: The story of Adam is copied from the Bible and corrupted. (p.27)
- Al-Baqarah 2:106): Allah changes his mind and abrogates his words in the Quran. Verse 106 is contradicted later in verse 15:9 (p.34)
- Al-Baqarah 2:178: Allah prescribes retaliation in the case of murder. This is a barbaric way of life. (p.40)
- Ali Imran 3:110: The United Arab Empire (according to Mohammed) was the best nation on earth. (p.71).
- Al-Nisa 4:24. It is lawful to seek women with money (prostitution-marriage for fun) (p.85)
- Al-Anam 6:151: verses 6:151, 17:33 and 25:68 justify "Honour Killings" of forbidden souls (Muslims) in the instance of murder, adultery and apostasy. (p.132)
- Al-Anfal 8:41: It is lawful to rob, and Mohammed receives one fifth of the spoil. (p.157)
- Al-Hijr 15:87: In Mohammed's days there were seven versions of the Quran. (p.237)
- Al-Nur 24:11: This is the alleged slander of Mohammed's favourite wife, Aisha, when three witnesses accused her of adultery, Mohammed increased the required number of witnesses to four, so that he would not have to punish her. (p.282)
- Al-Furqan 25:54: The interpretation of this verse by the Muslim scholar, Al-Qurtobi clearly teaches that a man can marry his own daughter or his sister who was conceived from an adulterous relationship. (p.291).
- Al-Najm 53:19-23: The three daughters of Allah (Al Lat, Al Ozza and Manat) are recorded in verses 19-20. The original verses following verse 20 were: "These are the exalted cranes (intermediaries) whose intercession is to be hoped for." Later

Mohammed said that these were Satanic verses, and he replaced them with the preset Verses 21-23 (p.423)

- Al-Tahreem 66:1: Allah corrects Mohammed concerning his forbidding himself from further sexual relations with Mary, the Coptic woman, with whom be committed adultery (p.459)
- Al-Muzammil 73:1: Muslims used to wrap Mohammed at the time of his receiving the revelation. (p.478)
- Al-Nisa 4:128: Women are inferior to men and should seek reconciliation with their rebellious husbands. (p.96)
- Al-Anam 6:118: Any food, including pork, can be eaten if the name of Allah is pronounced over it. (p.129)
- Al-Tawbah 9:1: This Surah begins with the word" innocent" in the Arabic language. Allah and his Messenger, Mohammad, are innocent of the killing of the idolaters, Christians, and the Jews, especially with those whom Mohammed had made a previous covenant, not to kill. (p.161).

As to the level of his grasp over the target language, the following examples reflect poorly on his competence. I) "He does not birth neither was he birthed." (Al-Ikhlas 112:3, p.526) and ii) "For the taming of the Quraish. Their taming journey is in winter and summer." (Quraish 106: 1-2, p.520).

Since Dakdok is a committed Christian missionary, he devotes scores of pages of this translation of the Quran to affirm the truth of Christianity. A detailed section "Bible Prophecies Fulfillments" (pp.649-661) triumphantly claims that these have come true. In a similar vein is the other piece, "What will you do with Jesus" (pp.662-674), insisting that only Jesus can grant salvation, as Islam is full of deceit and contradictions.

So this is a work of which the sole aim is to strike at the roots of Islam/Quran Yet its author has temerity to entitle it as "An Accurate modern English translation of the Quran" (Subtitle of the work)

Details of the first edition:
Usama Dakok Publishing LLC, Venice, FL. 2009. Pp. 687.

118
Abdolah, Kader
The Quran: A Journey
(2016)

As part of compiling the *Bibliography of the Translations of the Meaning of the Glorious Quran into English* 1649-2002 (Madina, Saudi Arabia, King Fahad Quran Printing Complex 2007), I had an apparently simple task of categorising the English translators of the Quran under such faith/ideological labels as Muslim/Christian/ Jew/Qadiyani and Orientalist. However, I came across three translations carried out by Rashad Khalifa, AMK Pathan, and Edip Yuksel who, notwithstanding their Muslim sounding names, did not qualify for their inclusion in the category of Muslim in the face of their outright rejection of certain fundamental articles of Islamic faith, ranging from the divine origin of the Quran to the integrity of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). I had to place them under a new category, "Others." Most regrettably, the Quran translation under review falls into the same category. Rather, it surpasses those earlier reprehensible ventures for being the most audacious and odious. The present translator's profile itself betrays his sacrilege of all Islamic sanctities:

"Kader Abdolah is a Leftist Iranian political refugee settled in Holland, after having 'tried and failed three times to get to New York on false passports' (*The Independent,* 10 February, 2016). Below are some of his bizarre ravings and rantings about the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), which the *Guardian* (4 July 2016) gleefully brands as 'the honourable intent of this leading voice in the liberal Netherlands.'

Notwithstanding his venture to engage with the Quran, a holy book which is revered by more than 1.5 billion Muslims in every part of the world, Abdolah has no scruples in distorting it beyond recognition. First, he speaks throughout of the Quran as

‘Muhammad’s prose,’ ‘Muhammad’s language,’ ‘Muhammad’s recitation,’ and ‘his Quran’ (pp. 9-10), ruling out its divine origin. Worse, he has the temerity to make these outrageous claims:

(i) To immortalise my prose, I have added a sura to the Quran, sura 115’ (p. 11).

(ii) “The prose of this journey is the combined prose of Muhammad ibn Abdullah and Kader Abdolah” (p. 12).

(iii) ‘I have removed a great deal of repetition [in the Quran]’ (p. 11). As a result of this drastic, ruthless erasure of what he deems to be repetition, Abdolah’s work offers only one-third of the Quran.

(iv) ‘The compilers of the Quran mixed the suras together in such a way that their chronological order was lost. As a result, a sort of chaos has taken hold ... 1 have restored the suras to their chronological order’ (p. 11). The contents page of this work, contingent upon Abdolah’s refusal to follow the traditional surah order appears in two columns thus: ‘a) Quran b) Kader Abdolah’s Quran’ (p. 376)

(v) ‘The Quran appears to be a chaotic book. There is no logical sequence in the recitations, and the segments seem to have been joined together at random. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to understand what is being said’ (p. 80).

(vi) ‘It would be an insult to Muhammad to say that the prose of the Quran is not from him, but from Allah’ (p. 85).

(vii) “It [Surah Yusuf] is a Jewish-Christian text that has acquired an Arabic guise’ (p. 147).

(viii) ‘[In the wake of a prostitute Sarah’s treachery], the following day he [the Prophet] introduced a new sura, al-Mumtahana.’ (p. 287)

Abdolah’s portrait of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) reminds one of the medieval Christian polemicists who ascribed all sorts of sexual debauchery and perversion to the Prophet. Some of

Abdolah's wild allegations against the Prophet are too offensive to be quoted here. Here are a few instances in point

(i) 'Muhammad went too far with women, and constantly sought new female companions... Allah cautions him, Enough, Muhammad!' (p. 280). Since it suits Abdolah to drag the name of Allah in this particular instance, he mentions the same, notwithstanding his earlier assertions that the Quran is the product of the Prophet's mind.

(ii) 'This very event [the slander campaign against [A'ishah] prompted Muhammad to introduce rigorous laws for women' (p. 301).

(iii) Surah al-Tahrim is interpreted with reference to the Prophet's sexual misconduct and the resultant 'massive argument' (p. 310) made by all of his wives.

(iv) "When he arrived in Medina, he took up arms and his words grew hard, "My sword shall give answer to those who contradict it [the Quran]" (p. 320).

(v) 'But after he [the Prophet] flees to Medina, his language changes completely. In Medina, he becomes a man of power who brandishes the sword, and his words acquire harsh overtones' (p. 15).

(vi) 'Muhammad ran out of patience with the Jews... Muhammad did something he should not have done... Debate emerged among Muhammad's followers; Muhammad introduced a new sura' (p. 331).

(vii) 'He fought against the Jews to convince the Arabs of his leadership' (p. 35).

(viii) 'This sura [Al-Isra,' 17] makes reference to Muhammad's fantasy journey' (p. 127).

(x) 'He never mentioned the Persian prophet Zarathrustra in his accounts... the followers of Muhammad forced the Persians

> to accept Islam ...the faith of Zarathrustra was thus expelled by Islam' (pp. 230-231).

Another obnoxious feature of Abdolah's work is his interpolation of lurid and fantastic stories about the Prophet David (p. 64), Mary (pp. 94-95), and the Prophet Abraham (p. 227). Unabashedly, he draws upon the totally unreliable *Isra'iliyyat* on this count.

As to his competence as a translator, he translates *Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim* as 'In the name of Allah/He is love/He gives/He forgives' (passim). In view of these unpardonable liberties taken in translating the text and his tendentious and mendacious stance on all that the Quran stands for, Abdolah's work merits contemptuous rejection.

Publication details of the first edition:

London: World Editions, 2016. pp. 382. ISBN: 9789462380233

119
Gerrans, Sam
The Quran: A Complete Revelation
(2016)

In his own words, Sam Gerrans is a north European Christian who turned to Islam and then embarked upon his own extensive translation and *tafsir* of the Quran. Throughout he projects himself as a "disaffected" Muslim who does not believe in Hadith, the traditionalist interpretation of Islam, and key Quranic terms and concepts. He endorses the views of those aberrant individuals and groups who reject the Islamic/Quranic views which are sneeringly discarded as "Traditionalists."

Ironically enough, while demolishing the centuries old understanding of Islam, he hoists his highly tendentious views on the Quranic text. For him, Makkah has no place in Islam. Petra, a town in Jordan is pivotal to the Islamic history. His following assertions re-echo the outlandish views of Revisionists/Neo-Orientalists like John Wansborough, Michael Cook, Andrew Rippin and Patricia Crone and the rabid anti-Islam ghost writer, Ibn Warraq:

> Makkah as the Mother of All Cities (i.e. a major trading city) is not sustainable historically, but fits Petra. Makkah is not found on any map until 900CE, 300 years after Muhammad's birth. Makkah does not have a distinct valley or substantial mountains [part of the Quranic concept of the holy site] yet Petra has both. (Footnote 9027).

Equally bizarre are his views on Hadith, which is next only to the Quran as a primary source. Audaciously enough, he consigns to dustbin the entire Hadith corpus, declaring:

> The Quran claims itself to be from God and complete. If this is true, there is no good reason to follow anything else. And if it is not true, there is no good reason to follow the Quran. The Hadith

> literature, by universal consent, it hearsay. The so-called science of Hadith… is predicated on obvious foolishness. (pp. ix-x)

He has deep distrust of classical Islamic scholars, as he rejects their contribution as "eclectic, erratic and unblushingly outcome based." (p.xi)

His critical survey of the "Existing Translation" (pp.xiv-xvii) betrays further his iconoclastic mind. His favourites are the pseudo-rationalist, Muhammad Asad and Ghulam Ahmad Parwez and the die-hard opponents of Islam/Hadith, though bearing Muslim sounding names like Edip Yuksel, Rashad Khalifa, and the Monotheistic Group. (Reviews on their works appear in this book). He praises the Iraqi Jew, N. J. Dawood for "his creative flourishes" but does not say a word about his vitriolic comments against Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his introduction. It is no surprise that he tears into pieces the pious, traditional rendering of the Qruan by Mohsin Khan and Hilali and Saheeh International authored by three new Muslim American ladies.

While producing his work in 2016 he feels no scruples in using such archaic, incomprehensible words as "Thee, Thou, hast (p.34), warnedst (p.38), inordinacy (p.41), nigh (p.43), holy unto thee (p.49), Thou art (p.50), wherewith (p.53), give the purity (p.54) and we gave Musa the Law and the Division (p.58) and mitigation. (p.60) Few readers can grasp these obsolete words. If a work fails to communicate, it cannot serve any purpose.

His denial of miracles is atrocious, as he goes to great lengths in twisting what the Quran means. Illustrative of it is his reckless translation of Surah Al-Fil:

> Hast thou not considered how thy Lord dealt with those weak in judgement. Did he not make their plans go astray? And he sent against them flights in successive waves, hurling upon them stones of brimstone then he made them like eaten straw. (Al-Fil 105: 1-5).

In his misplaced zeal he rules out the existence of Abraha and his army that had invaded hand and the birds which Allah had deputed

in a special, miraculous way in order to destroy Abraha's army. In his translation he does not even mention the elephant and birds.

Equally ludicrous is his translation and interpretation of Surah Al-Kawthar:

> So perform the duty to thy Lord and attain thou superlative mastery (Al-Kawthar 108:2).

His use of "Duty" for prayer and attaining "superlative mastery" for animal sacrifice distorts the intended meaning of the Quran. This incongruity stems from his misconception that Islam does not prescribe *salat* (prayer) and animal sacrifice. Nor does he think that Abu Lahab ever existed, who is condemned in Surah Al-Lahab. Accordingly he misinterprets the above Surah thus: For hism Abu Lahab represents only a type, not a historical person, as detailed in the works on *Sira* and *tafsir*. Worse, there is a misogynic note in his comment on Abu Lahab's wife: "t alludes to the woman's twisted, warped nature" (p.2127). Needless to say, the Quran simply speaks of her as the carrier of wood as fuel.

Appended to the work are several appendixes. Common to all of these is his deplorable attempt to divest a range of seminal Quranic terms and concepts of their true meaning and to offer their preposterous interpretation running over scores of pages. He tries his hand at the following: *rahman, kufr, iman, salat, zakah, sajda, din, shirk, masjid, ayah, zulm, haqq, huruf muqattat, hur,* etc. He has expressed his denial of Quranic commands in a whimsical way.

In sum, it is an utterly unreliable work which should be avoided.

Publication details of the first edition:
PDF version. Quranite. 2016 Pp.2326.

120
Mustafa Paigham
The Quran: God's Message to Mankind
English Rendition
(2017)

This Qur'an translation claims to be a 'New Millenium Exposition' and 'An Exegesis for the 21st century.' A clue to the translator's mind-set is provided by the list of his other writings which includes his English translation of Quranic Permanent Values by the Pakistani modernist Ghulam Ahmad Parvez (1903-1985). Common to both Paigham Mustafa and Parvez is their garbled version of things Islamic. Little wonder to note then that Mustafa's translation generated a heated controversy among the British Muslims soon after its publication due to its unconventional, disparaging views on all that is sacrosanct in Islam. It is indeed a tendentious and mendacious work that plays havoc with the meaning and message of the Qur'an.

Mustafa's Foreword opens with this divisive, offensive remark about Muslims whom he brands as 'those who profess to follow the Quran but in practice have additional doctrines and rituals not found in the Quran. A person need not be called a muslim in order to be one. Any suitable description (i.e. submitter, humanitarian) may be used instead' (p. 9). A little later, his condemnation of Muslims grows more scathing: 'The Quran says that muslims are knowledgeable, forward thinking and tolerant, but the traditional Muslims and their imams condemn and persecute those who differ from their medieval interpretation' (p. 14). His tirade then extends to Muslim countries: "There does not exist even one Muslim country in the world today which has achieved even a semblance of the social justice, equality in law, progress in knowledge, science and technology that has been achieved by the 'pagan' west' (p. 19). He accuses Muslims of having 'gods by the dozen,' following

'spurious Hadith and the religious concoctions and innovated rituals of the priestly mullahs.' For him, the 'traditions of the Hadith are false' (p. 20). Muslims are guilty of having 'ignored the Quran and instead glorify the Hadith' (p. 21) 'Mullah' is a recurrent target of his ire: 'Under mullah's direction the Muslims effectively killed off their own intellect' (p. 22). He charges the four distinguished Imams for having introduced the concept of taqlid which 'sealed off all questioning' (p. 23).

Equally outrageous is his definition of angels as 'the energies, forces of nature. neuron transport messaging' (p. 55). So is Adam 'a symbolic name and reference for all mankind, every individual. Self is represented by this allegorical person called Adam' (p. 56). For him Hell is not 'a place of torture for those who sin... it means life in regression' (p. 57). In the same vein, he contends: 'Jahannam in the Quran is a metaphor for a stagnant existence' (p. 77). Elsewhere his denial turns more pronounced: 'Heaven and Hell are allegorical descriptions... these should not be taken literally' (p. 447). For him, Masjid al-Haram and the Qiblah are 'Absolute Laws and Permanent Values and centre of attention only' (p. 69). Salah and sawm are merely 'commitments and self-discipline' (pp. 69 and 70). Brazenly, he declares that the Qur'an does not forbid any intoxicant (p. 79). He rejects out of hand the Qur'anic concept of intercession as 'undeserved favouritism' (p. 84). He takes a strong exception to the use of the expression mawlana used for the ulema in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. He notes in it 'the most serious connotation of making a man equal to God' (p. 90). According to him, the Qur'an 'strongly discourages polygamy' (p. 127). His departure from convention is evident in his observation: 'No slaughter ritual is mentioned in the Quran. There is no decree that animals need to be ritually slaughtered before their meat becomes lawful as food' (pp. 133 and 159). Likewise, the chopping of a thief's hand referred to in the Qur'an 'is an idiom... cut their hands does not mean to sever, it means to restrict their ability to commit further crimes' (p. 138). Also, he subscribes to the notion that Iblis is 'the egotistic aspect of the Self' (p. 166). More controversial is his assertion: 'Everything God has created (clothes, music, art,

perfume, jewellery, etc) is for enjoyment, as long as a wholesome discipline is maintained' (p. 168). He firmly believes in the theory of evolution: 'Life on earth evolved from a unicellular organism to the numerous forms we know today' (p. 221). Another instance of his divergence from the consensus juristic view is: 'Stoning as a punishment is not decreed in the Quran" (p. 229). More scandalous is his stance on wine: 'There is no decree in the Quran that makes wine haram' (p. 236). To hím Jinn is 'an invisible aspect of the human psyche' just as Iblis "is the free will of our Self" (p. 282). He denies outrightly the miraculous birth of the Prophet Jesus, branding it as 'improbable no, impossible' (p. 288). He is of the view that 'beards are of no consequence in determining your sincerity or integrity as a muslim and certainly are not obligatory as an act of belief' (p. 299). It is bewildering to note his observation: 'There is no charity decreed in the Quran' (p. 309). In a similar vein, is his remark: "The veil or hijab is not decreed in the Quran" (p. 385). It is mind-boggling how one could make such statements which are patently contrary to both the word and spirit of the Qur'an.

Paigham's ire against Hadith is deplorable: 'Hadith have been written hundreds of years after the death of the messenger and contain profanities that tarnish the messenger and blatantly contradict the Quran... To use conflicting doctrines [in Hadith collections) to supplement the Quran is shirk, as it is setting up another authority as lawmakers to rank with God... Bukhari was of Persian origin and perhaps not familiar with Arabic' (pp. 373, 513 and 534). Verse 7 of Surah Nuh castigates the unbelievers for placing their fingers in their ears and covering themselves with their clothes in order to avoid listening to the Prophet Noah's advice. This, however, prompts Paigham to pass this trenchant stricture against the outer garment or robe donned by modest Muslim women: 'The mode of dress (such as the Burka) or any similar attire that covers a person and hides their features is not something believers would do' (p. 519). He dismisses the practice of circumcision on the ground: 'God designed the human perfect and fabricated doctrines decreed circumcision for men' (p. 540).

In view of such bizarre pronouncements one can understand why its publication caused a furore among the British Muslim community. A translation of the Qur'an vitiated by such dogmatic presuppositions and whimsical notions is bound to sow discord. Worse, far from serving the cause of the Qur'an by way of promoting its life-giving message, it creates dissensions and protests which further stigmatizes Islam and Muslims. The votaries of freedom of expression misconstrue the opposition by the ulema and the community as gagging by the thought police.

The level of both transliteration and translation is not up to the mark. Here are some instances of faulty transliteration: 'Younas, Al-Anbya, Al-Roum, YaSeen, Yousaf, Al-Fatth, Al-Al-Ma'aarej, Al-Muddathir, Al-Mursalaat, Al-A'alaa and Al-Sharrh' (pp. 47-49). The instances of mistranslation are: verse 2 of al-Kawthar, 3 of Quraysh, 4 and 5 of al-Maun, 1 of al-Masad, 3 of Muhammad, 1, 13, 25 and 27, of al-Fath, 4-5 of al-Hujurat, 15 and 33 of al-Rahman, 55 and 56 of al-Waqiah. 19 of al-Hadid and 4 of al-Mujadalah. Some glaring examples of his garbled translation are as follows:

Believers! Fasting is enjoined upon you, as it was enjoined upon those before you, that you become God-fearing. Fasting is for a fixed number of days. (Al-Baqarah 2: 183-184). O you who believe, Self-restraint as a discipline is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation. Specific days should be designated for this Self-restraint. (Paigham's rendering of Al-Baqarah 2: 183-184, pp. 73-74)

Complete Hajj and [Umrah for Allah... The months of Hajj are well known. (Al-Baqarah 2: 196 and 197) You shall take the challenge to promote the living System in the name of God... Challenges can be taken during some specified periods. (Paigham's version of Al-Baqarah 2: 196 and 197, p. 76)

Inexplicably, Paigham does not translate or present correctly even such basic articles of Islamic faith as salah, sawm, hajj and zakah which he renders as commitment, self-restraint, challenge and purity in character respectively. Needless to add, this unpardonable

liberty makes it impossible for readers to recognize even these seminal Qur'anic terms.

Appended to the work are several appendices, marred once again by his outrageous views (pp. 576-683). It is deplorable that such reckless works will confound readers, especially those new to Islam and the Qur'an.

Publication details of the first edition:

London, Xietre-Singat International House, 2017, pp. 687, ISBN: 9780995509849

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